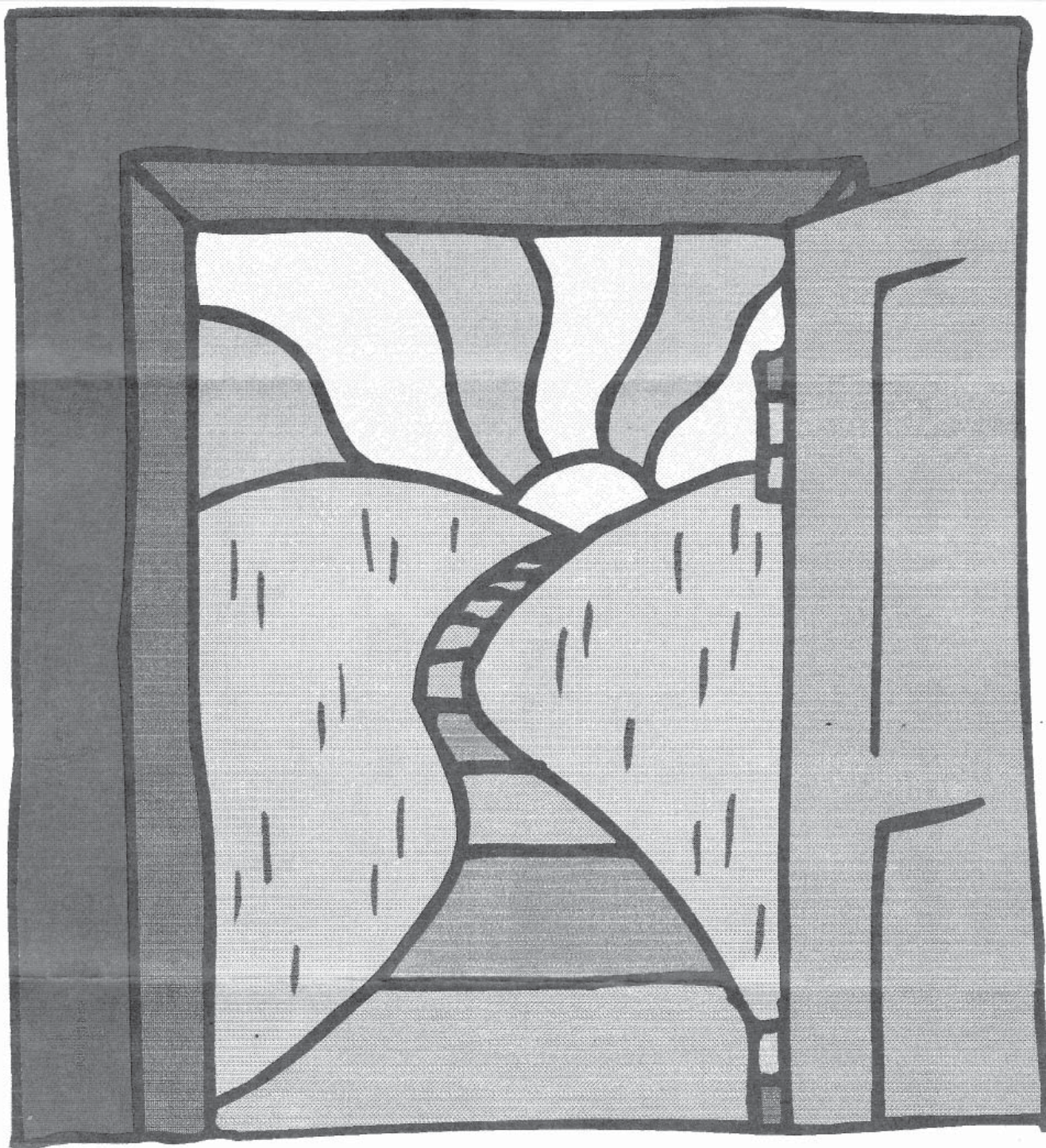




DOORWAY TO THE FUTURE

EDITOR'S NOTE VOLUME 11.25+

Hello Beat editorial note readers. After a week off from our duties, we are back, and you few loyal readers are in for a treat! We have our very own, the very vocal and caring, Pauline Craig, stepping to the plate to share her thoughts in this latest editorial note. For your information, the very loving Pauline has been a part of The Beat for many years. Currently she not only edits and types, she facilitates workshops in SF/YGC, LCRS and Marin County, plus does what she can to bring in money for this so worthy program. Way to go Pauline! We appreciate the loyalty you give this publication each day and thank you for delivering your first editor's note! Take it away Pauline!

This past June, the brilliant, prolific, magical Dominic aka Scorpion, loyal veteran of our Beat Within workshops throughout the past year, graduated from high school out of Marin County Juvenile Hall, and we at The Beat congratulate him and offer him all our best. What an achievement!

And to all the young men and women in juvenile halls who have received their high school diplomas this Spring—we're proud of you and happy for you!

What inspires a teenage young man who has described, in his myriad writings for The Beat, that before he was arrested, he was so homeless that for days, he lived in a dumpster; that neither of his parents will allow him into their homes although his mother lives ten minutes away from Marin Juvy; and who had dropped out of school years ago, to find the strength, courage and patience to continue going to school in Marin Juvy and earn his high school diploma?

Yes, Dominic, who has written profound, sensuous, funny and heartbreaking poems, essays and short stories for The Beat Within, believes in the efficacy of his education, and although he has no family nor home to go to when he's released from Marin Juvy in late July, he hopes, maybe after a year or two of "exploring the world," to go to college. And we here at The Beat are eager to hire him as an intern, to help him finance his college education, whenever he's ready, just as we do other Juvy graduates from our workshops.

But what about all the other youth in juvenile halls around the Bay Area, that The Beat Within encourages and hopes will stay in school on the outs? Many teens in our workshops tell us they've dropped out of school, in some cases, years ago, never to return, until they recently messed up, got arrested, bounced into juvenile hall, and were forced to go to school, as part of their Juvy programs. How did the public schools lose these youth before they graduated? What about the kids who say they hate school? Who dismiss it altogether as useless? Or find it boring? Claim school rarely or never teaches them anything they care about? Anything relevant to their lives? What about kids who get passed on from grade to grade without learning anything, so in frustration and/or despair, they quit? Or get suspended or expelled, become discouraged, and never return to school? Where do these kids go when school no longer inspires them, answers their needs, at least enough to keep them attending classes, or threatens their physical safety so severely that, although they're legally required to go to school, they drop out, and no one seems to care that they're gone? Home, watching TV or computer video games? The block? The streets? A low-wage job? Juvy? A dumpster?

Seventeen-year-old Diego, a resident at SF/YGC's Log Cabin Ranch in La Honda, California, tells how he quit school three years ago and knew he'd never go back, because he never did well in school, never liked it, and would feel humiliated if he ever returned because he would be older than the other kids. But because the Log Cabin program requires him to attend regular daily school classes each weekday and accumulate points to earn any privileges—to play soccer, baseball or basketball against other county Juvy Ranch teams; go camping in Big Sur or go to the Monterey Aquarium; or to go to visit San Quentin with the Omega Boys' Club Squires Program, and to finally get off the Ranch and go home—he has chosen to go to school. When asked how he feels about being back in school even under duress, he shrugs, smiles and indicates that he's relieved that he's back in his classes, and says he knows he needs that education. Although not many youth in Juvy praise the quality of education they receive there, with kids from 11-18 jumbled into the same unit classes, some realize that it at least prepares them to accept and get used to going to school as part of their normal day on the outs. It keeps them in the world of learning, headed toward legitimate employment if they want it, and helps enhance their opportunities at accomplishing their dreams.

Others, like Chris in SF/YGC's B4 unit, say that although they never learned anything in class and failed their exams, their schools passed them from grade to grade, in Chris's case, from the sixth to the seventh and from being a junior to a senior, without their actually fulfilling the year's requirements. As Chris says, he resents that he has no education, and that it would have been better if his teachers had held him back, until he learned the information provided by subjects he needs.

Another problem that has recently become prevalent nowadays in public schools is the possibly well-intended but arguably counterproductive "No Child Left Behind" program that now includes an exit exam senior students are required to pass before they can receive their high school diplomas. As Perry Jones, a facilitator with The Beat Within, so eloquently asks in an essay, how many of those kids who have found the endurance to attend school all those years, pass the class tests, write the assigned papers, do well on their SAT scores, but become stymied when they confront the notorious exit exam, with its reputation amongst many students as being impossible to pass? Too many teens, who are proud of their school records, get discouraged, just give up, quit school without finishing their class requirements, "go dumb," and never enter a school again, Perry contends. What sense, he asks, does that make?

But what about all the kids who mess up somehow in school—whether they skip school, fight, throw crumpled up paper balls at a wastebasket, sass a teacher, smuggle weapons or drugs into school—whom their school principals either suspend for a day or two; expel provisionally, until the next beginning of next semester if he or she doesn't mess up again until then; or who are expelled from their school permanently?

Elliot, now a former student in a San Leandro High School, says he told a girl in his class who was bothering him, to get out of his face. When she went to their school principal and accused Elliot of racism, the principal expelled him, at least until the end of the school year. Now Elliot is considering home schooling, but who knows? He feels very disillusioned about school. Will he ever go back? With school boards complaining that kids are dropping out of school in epidemic proportions, it seems counterproductive for school administrators to use suspension or the expelling of students as a first line of punishment, not the last one they resort to, and/or then send these kids to Juvy for truancy.

However, many teens in our Juvy workshops tell us that it often happens that students in their high schools, and sometimes even in middle

schools, bring guns, knives, even razors, as weapons to school, hidden in their backpacks, lockers, pockets, wedged into the back waists of their pants. Some kids as young as twelve reveal they carry weapons almost all the time, including to school, and claim they need those weapons for constant protection. Some students say they have snuck weapons into school for years, and sometimes add that the school administrators know about the weapons, but either are in denial that it is a problem in their school, are too overwhelmed by the problem to try to stop it, or are so intimidated and afraid of the armed students, they just try to pretend the kids aren't packing, or hiding those weapons somewhere within the school grounds to retrieve after school. Many maintain principals and teachers also don't want to deal with parents who object to metal detectors in their children's schools. Whether it's with searches, metal detectors, whatever—get those weapons out of the schools—someone's going to get seriously hurt or killed! But keep even those students who bring weapons to school in school, don't expel them, because they are often the ones who need most to be reassured profoundly how valuable they are, how much we care about them, and that we'll stand by them and provide that education they need. Get rid of the weapons, not them. And if school administrators can't guarantee that each student in their facility is physically safe, what good are they?

And many youth report that students bring all kinds of drugs—weed (marijuana), E (ecstasy), meth (methamphetamine), crack cocaine, whatever, to school, to sell to other students, and that the school administrators know they do, and unless someone reports directly (snitches) a student out who is carrying drugs, the administrators do virtually nothing to stop it. What's up with that? All drugs out of the schools now! Burn or destroy the drugs, but keep the kids in school, because school is one vital contender for the hearts and souls of youth who feel so deeply the lure of the streets. Who's in control of these schools, anyhow?

Why not encourage all students to stay in school to get their education, no matter what? Treat the students with respect and their education as the precious tool it can be, and praise students when they bust their backsides to learn all they can? And when kids mess up, what ever happened to after-school detention? Kids hate detention. Wouldn't detention, in the library, cafeteria, gym, where the kids can/must do their homework for an hour or two after school on the day they get in trouble, make more sense than suspending or expelling him or her, which can ultimately sabotage their education, too often permanently? (To be continued)

Yes, a Beat first a continued editorial note! Thank you Pauline for telling it as you see it, hear it, from our many young writers who touch you each week.

The topics discussed in our workshops prior to the great, great honest writing featured in this issue were the popular, "Is It In Your Blood?" Does it run in your family? We want to know if the life that you lead, have led, or are going to lead runs in your genes? If you are a gangster, pimp, or hustler, does it run in your blood? Was your dad or mom a gangster, pimp or hustler? If it runs in your blood, do you feel like you have to follow in the same footsteps? It doesn't necessarily have to be your parents; it could be your uncles, aunts, cousins, brothers, anybody related to you. For example, if somebody in your family is using drugs or was using drugs, did that affect you to become a drug user? If you came from a family of drug pushers, did it make you become a hustler? Or do you come from family that doesn't have anything to do with the street life? Maybe it's in your blood to go to college, and get a career/degree, be a musician, artist, or a great athlete. We all get influenced by our loved ones both negatively and positively, so, tell us what runs in your blood.

Equally popular, our second topic, "What Makes Your Heart Beat Faster?" - What's ya heart beatin' so hard for? What causes it to do this and who is around you when it happens? Tell us about a time where you felt your heart start beating faster, boom, boom, boom, and you couldn't make it slow down. What was running through your mind, and how did you feel — scared, emotional, nervous, etc? Share a time when you experienced this, and give us all the heart-beating details.

Last but definitely not least from issue 11.25 topics, "What Bothers You?" - Any hating will not be tolerated, so in detail and in respect, educate the readers through story and/or poem as to what bothers you.

Since we have a chunk of 11.26 in this issue this week as well as next, the topics from 11.26 are, "That Lie" - Sadly we have all been told lies, from those close to us, like our love ones, to those not so close, like those in government or the history books we have read in school. Many lies, for better or worse, have affected our choices and the paths we are on. This week we want you to write about the lies that have affected you in your young life. Be as specific as you can.

Second, "How Do You Determine A Real Smile From One That Is Fake?" - We're pretty sure that you all were warned one way or another to keep an open eye for those who will smile in your face then stab you in the back when you least expect it. We've also had the experience of distrusting someone, later to learn that they were solid! With that in mind we are trying to figure out how do you read in between the lines of a smile coming from a total stranger, or a smile coming from a person who you "Feel" or "Know"? What do you look for to determine a smile that is sincerely from the heart? Can you tell us of a time when you trusted someone's smile that you should not have, or where you distrusted someone's smile that you should have trusted?

Last, everything you wanted to know about, "Going Dumb, Stupid, Hyphy"—What does going dumb, stupid, or hyphy mean to you? Is it a feeling or a way of life? When have you gone dumb, stupid, or hyphy? Has going dumb, stupid, or hyphy ever gotten you in trouble? What do you have to say to people who don't understand, or think that going dumb, stupid, or hyphy is ridiculous? Let us know what your thoughts are on this Bay movement, and as always, keep it Beat appropriate.

All right, this week we have a host of POWs (Pieces Of The Week)! Props to Wayne, Lil' Sam, Chris, Lil' Jt, De Angelo, Jea Etta, A Youngsta, Demetrus, Jeremy, and David all from the 150 Crew. Also we have Zoltan and Tracy from SF/YGC, Clover and Pooh Bear from Walden House PSK, Perry from Marin, Marcus from Arizona, Alfonso and Jackson from Santa Cruz.

This fabulous issue not only goes out to all teachers in our community, from preschool to college and everything in between who have touched our lives in one way or another. Thank you. We hope you all are having a wonderful summer vacation if you're not working, you all deserve it! And lets give some love to the 2006 World Cup Champions of the World; Italia! Italia! Italia! Regardless of who won, what a great month of soccer, what a breath-taking finale! What to do now?

Best to you all see you next week!

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Special Volunteer: Nancy DeMartini

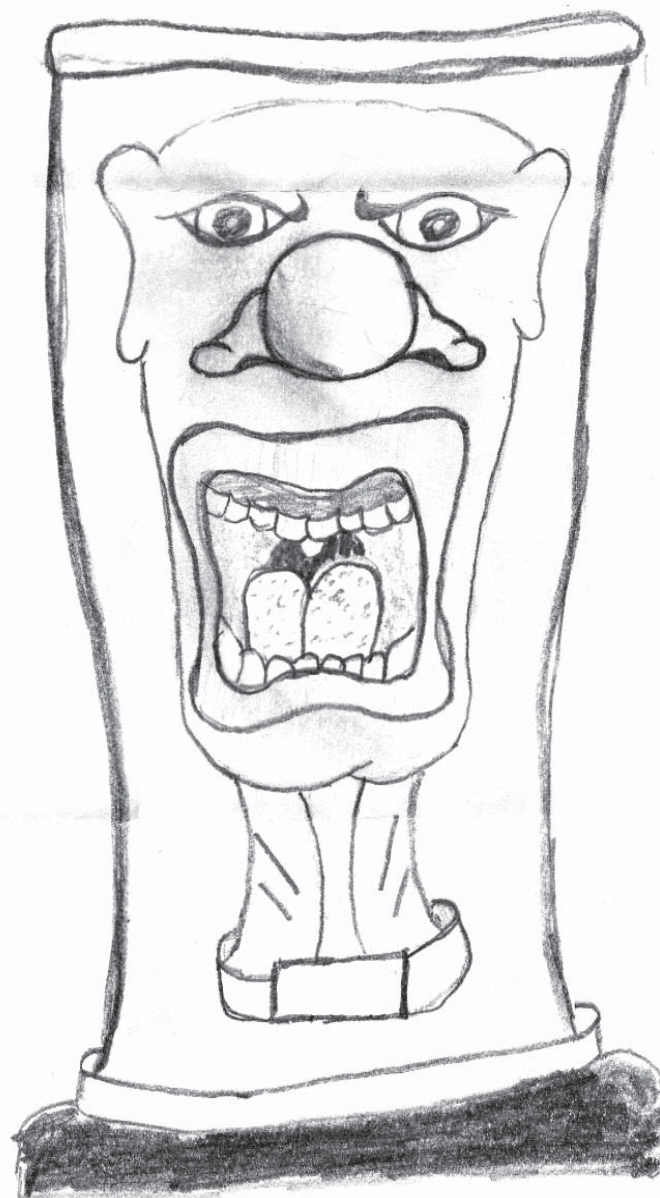
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www.thebeatwithin.org

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Stand up

it feel like i'm close to insanity
 unfit to be amongst humanity
 soul rotting away like a wisdom tooth cavity
 george bush speaking of democracy
 then why these streets filled with poverty
 young soldiers dying for ignorance confused with bravery
 correctional system another version of slavery
 it's genocide — mixing misery with pride
 a whole world of different personalities waiting to collide
 wouldn't know freedom if it was right in front your eyes
 whole judicial system filled with lies
 but nobody hears you cry
 they're just waiting to criticize
 no justice when a loved one dies
 the only thing promised is death
 try to block it out — let it be weed e-pills syrup or meth
 but after that's gone what do you have left
 — knowledge — so put the books to the test
 everyday i face discrimination black brown and asian
 we all facin' the abomination of our confused nation
 and what's this war on drugs
 bein' black poor and hungry makes you a thug
 when you' trying put food on the table for the people you
 love
 i'm trying to understand the system
 but how when there's no one to listen
 the only thing that matters is another cell to be filled in
 prison
 this world is so incomplete
 lil' kids growin' up with no food on the table to eat
 we refuse to show pain or fear
 emotionally dry like a tear duct that can't shed a tear
 we're living in hell
 sixty-five percent of us are destined to fail
 and fifty percent of that are dead or in a cell
 instead of building more schools the governor is building
 jails
 these democratical uncle toms
 keep knocking us down like a hammer to a nail
 moving in slow motion like a snail
 four hundred years later and we still haven't stood up for
 ourselves

-Wayne, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Fighting racial discrimination through the courts has not done much to bring economic rewards to downtrodden and impoverished people of color. Even if the President's cabinet is no longer as white as a field that's snow-covered, democratic vistas of a nation where all partake of the American dream is no closer today than it has ever been. Forty acres and a mule, never did occur, and economic reparations for the wounds of slavery that have never healed for the descendants of those working in the fields, is still a dream deferred. Now the plan seems to be to create a third-world economy right here at home, where the rich get richer and the poor get nothing but locked up quicker. No wonder you grow impatient with democracy, 'cause it's hypocrisy when one man one vote gets reduced to who spends the most money for ads on TV. Flip the channel and gangsta rap still keeps the youngsters in the ghetto killin' their own peeps. Where is a visionary leader to awaken the conscience of a people who have mistaken freedom for an SUV, then go to war in search of cheaper gasoline — another lie of the war machine!

A Changed Man

My family is good because they love me no matter what I do because what I did was very wrong. That is why I am up in here, because I did something I should've never did, because it was very wrong.

But I wasn't in the right mind at that time, because I saw something that I shouldn't have saw: When I was still young. I saw my mother get murdered right in my face, that's why I was so wild on the street, because I didn't know what to do because I lost my mother, and she was the only person I had in my life.

So I took that very hard. And now I pray every night to my Lord and Savior and ask him can he forgive me for the sins that I did in the past, because I turned my life around and realized what I have to do in life -- and that's to live a good life and not a bad life. Because most people said that if you live a bad life, you would not live to the age of 25. Because of how you are living your life.

That's why when I get out I am going to live a good life with my family and probably have some kids. Not yet though because I am still young. So that's why I love my family and probably will have some kids. Not yet though, because I am still young. So that's why I love my family, because they love me and how they love me. I never had a family like that since my mom died. So all I got to say when I get out I hope people that I know don't be looking at me crazy because I am a changed man. So God bless all my people.

-Lil' Sam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sam, when we hear your story about your mom, we feel so much admiration for you, because even after what you've seen and been through, you've still got so much heart and insight in all the pieces you write for The Beat. You've lived through one of the most horrifying and traumatic events a person can face, and we admire you for trying to overcome it and reach out to family and support. You're going to need that support, because there will always be those angry and painful memories, so you need anything that will help you "stay in your right mind". What happened to knock you out of your right mind when you committed that crime? Maybe if you look back on that it will help you prepare for the next time you start to feel yourself tempted to walk off this new path you've chosen for yourself.

RIP Marcellus,

Your Baby Daughter is Doin' Fine

What makes my heart beat fast is when I think about Marcellus who died. My heart beat because of when I think about him I feel lost in the inside, like things is never going to be right which it's not. I think about things we did within the past like hollar at girls or play basketball and talk about what was going to happen when our babies got here. Before he died the baby was born. He had a girl and her name is Mareanna H.

When me and Marcellus, the father of the baby, went to the baby shower, his mom, dad and other people was there. Marcellus made me the best man, which is his right hand man, and that meant a lot to me, but when he passed away, that hurt my heart and head. And ever since I been having head pains and chest pains which burn inside me, but I want Marcellus aka Cell to know that when my baby is born in September that he's still my best man. I love you Marcellus H. for life, and everyone miss you, and your baby is doin' fine.

-Chris, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Marcellus left you with a great gift and a great responsibility, to watch over his baby. We're not saying you need to be her father, but you do need to do your best to help her along the way in this world, which means that your number one job right now is to stay alive - to stay out of harm's way, to build a future for yourself that's positive, in honor of him, and in honor of his love for young Mareanna Haley. Can you live up to this challenge?



Thinking About Life

my mind is racin'
my body is pacin'
'cause i'm thinkin' 'bout
how much time i'm facin'
these ninjas is hatin'
my time is comin' i'm waitin'
sittin' here thinkin' 'bout my obligations
the choices i'm makin'
the time i'm wastin',
god please help me to overcome this nation
can you see i'm stressin'
i'm asking a question
go to school so
you can get your education,
my mind is poundin' so much
it feels like a fast vibration
when i look around i see so much action
ninja don't you know that somebody' grandma you
jackin'
it feel like my bones is broke i need a x-radiation
i often use the word pre-conception
people always do things, such as fortification
when something jump off i use so much caution
my life is moving in a fast rotation
in this here world it feels like no gravitation
when i get out i'm'a take a long vacation
in these streets you need some kind of protection
every time i turn around in a casket somebody' layin'
youngstas, youngstas, youngstas, let's stop the killin'
turn yourself around because life is what god's savin'
the devil is tryin' to take over he got yo' azz caged in
instead we're locked up feelin' like some enslaved men
why — because we're running around here like some
crazy-azz jamaicans
every time we get locked up that's the money they
makin'
our self, our life, is what we need to be changin'
put down that bottle, stop that drinkin'
turn your life around, but you gotta start thinkin'

-Lil' JT, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nobody can lay it down like Lil' JT when he decides to write about how to stay free and puts it up close against seeing life's casualties mounting every day and night in our cities' streets. Everyone carries a thing for protection when what they need to do is turn in another direction. Slanging drugs around gun-toting crazy thugs is like putting your mug up as a target for the next thizzed-out, cranked-up thug to try to mark it with a bullet 'cause he couldn't feel like a man till he pulled it — and then, he's just another killer headed for the pen' or another thug on the run with a target on his head for a vengeful gun. Thanks for reminding our young readers that there has to be a better way than in and out of incarceration, incarcerated to stay, or an early grave. Get a job to get your pay, and go home at night to show your family some love, okay?

youngstas, let's stop the killin'
turn yourself around because life is what
god's savin'
the devil is tryin' to take over
he got yo' azz caged in
instead we're locked up feelin'
like some enslaved men

What Bothers Me

What bothers me is that I am locked up
What bothers me are the endless rules, which seem to come
from the air
What bothers me are my tagged up, scratched walls
What bothers me is that I can't fight back, can't fight the
system
What bothers me is the 9 o'clock bed time and the 7 wake
up
What bothers me is that I can't see what's happening
outside
What bothers me is the food... do I need to say more
What bothers me is the fear, the fear of me, like I am a
monster
What bothers me is the lack of nature, the lack of friends
and family that I can't see
What bothers me is the lack of freedom... I'm starting to
forget
How each day felt on the outside
How the wind felt
How the rain sounded against my roof
How life was.

-Zoltan B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You've got a lot of things bothering you, Z, but if we were in your shoes, we'd be bothered too. All we can say is that anyone who feels as deeply, anyone as sensitive to the absurdity of certain realities, and anyone who can put it down as simply and directly — and powerfully — as you is in no danger of forgetting the wind or the rain or the greatness of life.

What bothers me is that I can't
fight back, can't fight the system

Don't Pop Pills

just like whitney said — "crack is whack"
well pills drain spinal fluid from your back
they have symbols on them of things we see today
like safeway, nike sign, scorpions, mcdonalds and even
mac dre
mac dre is a big influence fo' poppin' thizz
but he didn't care 'cause that's his bizz
a pill is mixed with every drug except for weed
the reason it keeps you up all night is 'cause of the speed
whatever mood you in, the pill gives you more of that
feeling
so if you mad and violent then you might go start killin'
it puts holes in your brain and you could die
i have popped pills before but that ain't my type of high
you might as well smoke crack 'cause thizz is a lot of drugs
but since yo' patnas do it, you think you more of a thug
you think you do stuff 'cause you thizzin' and got a gun
but you will see what happens in the long run

-DeAngelo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Great rhyme that puts thizzing back in line, 'cause your words are full of truth learned from experience you've witnessed and lived through. The part about how it makes you feel whatever you're feeling more intensely including murderous rage, should be taken very seriously by everyone who reads this page. We, too, have witnessed more than a few who would not have pulled the trigger and killed if they hadn't been thizzing off ecstasy pills, sometimes for days on end. Crack is back doing ghetto youngsters ill, disguised as a triple-stack or whatever ecstasy pill.

I'm Sorry

You are my brother and sister
 My reason for living and succeeding'
 When you were born, I knew your life would be ruled
 By Grown ups you saw a lot —
 Not only playgrounds and schools
 But mommy getting beat up and dating all those fools
 Your father was a cokehead, in and out of jail
 Then quite drugs, then went to sell it
 When you started to grow up
 Your life became a nightmare, but real
 Seeing everything —
 from fights and mommy in bed with another man
 I felt sorry for you and tried to fix it
 But then everything ran away and I missed it
 I love you and I'm sorry I left you
 I had to go, I couldn't stay
 Every time I saw them, I wanted them to pay
 I hated them for hurting you and me
 But now that I realize, I hurt you too
 I left you with them to suffer
 Went, did drugs, and even met a man I thought I loved
 I abandoned you and I'm sorry
 You're my whole world, and I never knew it
 I never realized I was gone for so long leaving you alone
 We're alike in many ways and will always be the same
 Our parents treated us like garbage
 Chose men, women and drugs over us
 Now, I'm trying to change, to be with you again
 I'm not home, but I know you're not alone
 I'm trying so hard to do this, to come home to you
 Now I realize all the drugs I used to do
 I know how wrong I was to do drugs
 with someone who was your blood
 Your father was my dad...
 I never knew he'd be gone
 Having kids with a woman I didn't know
 You were in the car watching,
 You saw him throw the first punch
 I screamed at you to leave
 Not knowing that he could be so mean
 You saw the blood run down my face
 And all he things I wanted to erase
 I hated you seeing me hurt
 Lying there in the dirt
 You asked me:
 If he loved me, why he hit me
 And I couldn't explain
 I hated you seeing me fighting for my life
 And my dignity
 After that day, you protected me
 Watching my back for everyone to see
 You were my girl and my boy
 Always telling everyone you were there by choice
 I wanted to take care of you so you never had to
 I just wanted to be beside you
 Just remember I'm never going to lie to you
 Always will be there, no matter where
 I'd die for you, don't forget that
 You will always be my family —
 Never sad, mad or goin' bad
 Because I will always be there to save and guide you
 Never forget me, I won't you
 Just remember I will always love you

-Clover, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We can feel the pain in every word of this heartfelt apology. If we have anything to add, it is this: You blame your parents for choosing drugs and alcohol and sex over you and your siblings, and you're right to be angry at them for that. But then you also admit that you, too, abandoned your siblings and followed some of the same dead-end choices that you blame your parents for. So, all we're saying is that we hope you bring a degree of understanding to the difficulties in your parents' lives that might have contributed to their failures as parents — just as the difficulties in your life contributed to your initial failure as a sister. You can make up for the past, but you can't change it. Forgive yourself, and in that process, maybe you can find a way to forgive them, too.

Imagine

Imagine being raped at age five
 Imagine at nine wanting to commit suicide
 Imagine at twelve your mom not in your life
 Imagine your whole life
 filled with pain and strife
 Imagine being insane and tears falling
 From your eyes
 Imagine feeling alone and wanting to
 Die
 Imagine screaming but no one can
 Hear you
 Imagine feeling so much anger and
 Not knowing what to do
 Imagine
 Imagine what it's like
 Imagine not being able to control what's in your life

-Jea Etta, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have been through a lot and we can't even imagine being in your place, yet we are encourage by your writing and your desire to teach us from what it is you have/are experiencing. Even though you can't control what's in your life, you can control the way you live it. You are a strong young lady and have struggle through and live through harsh situations some of us can't even place ourselves in. This only shows how strong and determine you are to want to live through life. Don't let your past pull you down, don't let what's happen in the past be your excuse to waste your life, be the strong lady we know you are and make a future for yourself. Stay strong and thank you very much for sharing your struggles with us.

Or how about that incredible feeling
 Of the first kiss
 Of a newly sparked love
 And everything is silent
 Except for the beating of your heart

When Your Heart Beats

What makes our heart beat faster, you ask me?
 Well, I don't know...
 Every emotion of fear, love, anger, or hate
 Or that feeling you get
 Before walking into a courtroom
 The eager moment of trying to
 Grasp onto opportunity before it slips away
 And then you get anxious
 And then there is silence
 And then your heart races
 The times when anger just grows and grows
 Inside you enough to make your blood boil
 Or the tense voice you stutter
 When you have just lied to your best friend
 That sends your heart pounding so hard
 You swear other people can hear it
 Or how about that incredible feeling
 Of the first kiss
 Of a newly sparked love
 And everything is silent
 Except for the beating of your heart
 As if all eyes are on you
 And you feel wonderful
 That's when you realize:
 Everything you are fighting for you already have
 Like a heart needs a beat.

-Tracy GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a wonderful poem, Tracy. You have described the intense emotions of life, the many beautiful and fearful situations that lead to your heart beating furiously. When a writer can make us nod our heads in recognition of common human experiences (like that kiss when everything stands still except for the beating of your heart), we know we have discovered something wonderful. Don't stop writing!

My Continuing Journey Through Hell

Layin' in my cell
 Thinkin' it's hell
 My very first time
 Damn, this bed hurt my spine
 Little did I know
 This was a start of a long road
 That eight days seemed like a lot
 But, unfortunately
 Not enough to make me stop
 Just three weeks went by
 I was back another time
 So I was thinkin' to myself
 Damn, I need help
 I wanted to change
 So at home I would remain
 I was being told
 I was being placed in my dad's home
 And next time it wouldn't be a place so warm
 But all I could do was postpone
 The negative thoughts in my mind
 Just stayed strong
 I had almost made it half a year
 When yet another drug caught my ear
 I thought, if I was smart
 I wouldn't get caught
 But when you are high
 You are not in your right mind
 And you forget how to play
 This game they call life
 And land back in
 But this time with a strike
 From the last little twenty-six days
 To fourteen months away
 I thought this time
 I had to be done
 So my battle with the system
 Could be won
 But this time
 I had accomplished my goal
 April 12, 2006
 Terminated probation was whole
 So I thought I was free
 But I didn't comprehend
 I wasn't out of reach
 For May 10, 2006
 I was back in jail
 But still, I'm a minor
 So there ain't no bail
 They told me next time
 I would be charged as an adult
 Not juvenile, but criminal court
 Sentenced to eighty-four days
 Told me next time
 Years I would remain
 So all I got is time to think
 Mess up again
 Or stay out and be free

-Perry, Marin

From The Beat: Why are you putting yourself out there to let the system mess with you? Why are you trying to play the system? Why don't you just stop doing whatever it is you do to get busted and stay on the outs? What else goes on in your life besides the juvenile justice drama? What else means as much or more than whatever is tempting you so badly and sabotaging your freedom? What kind of strength do you need to grow beyond all this mess? Where can you get that strength to give whatever up and move on? Who can help you? In the meantime help yourself!

Hear This . . .

Yes this life does run in my family. My dad was a serious drug dealer in Union City and all the cops knew him. We would always get our house raided by cops. it was too much sometimes, no all the times. My dad would hit me, my mom and my sister. Drugs turned him hella evil, but he would really hit my mom. He would sock her and push her head into the walls sometimes. Sometimes I would get beat with the belt my dad would use to work out with.

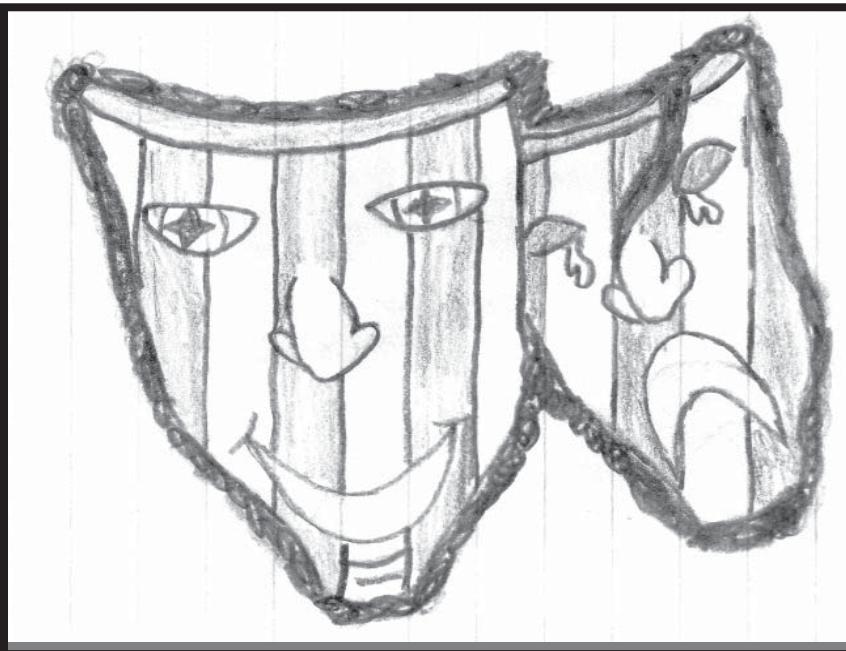
As a little kid I was traumatized by the stuff I seen, being around guns and drugs almost ended my life. One day when I was four and a half my Uncle June was loading a gun on our kitchen table, my dad yelled his name and went upstairs. And I thought to myself, that gun looks cool. I picked it up and aimed it at myself. When I was about to shoot it I heard my uncle coming, I put it back.

When or if somebody reads this, make sure you watch what you have around your kids, 'cause they could be gone in a fingersnap by the time you people read this, I might be out. So to all you people good luck, and don't lose faith in God.

I'm out. Peace.

-A Youngsta, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We so wish you'd put a name on this gripping and heartbreaking piece, so we could give you proper credit for your message, your experience, your life story, the heart it takes to write about things like this on paper. The best we can do, though, is highlight your message and hope that our readers feel what you've been through and hear what you say. Next time, sign your name - with pride.



My Happiest Birthday Memory

My happiest birthday was when I turned fourteen years old. I got a lot of love from my grandmother; and I went shopping and got lots of clothes and shoes; and I was grateful for what I got! And I got a Play Station 2, and I got some CD's. But what mattered most to me was that it came from the heart!

I got a big cake and a lot of ice cream, and we ate a lot of hot links and hot dogs. We drank a lot of soda and ate chips, too. But what mattered most to me was that it came from the heart. And the best thing I got for my birthday, was my grandma saying that she loved me. That is all I want from my grandma, because she was the one that raised me after I got hit by a car. She took me from the hospital. I mean, my dad came to see me in there. But when I was hurt, it was my grandma who took care of me.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The ice cream and hot dogs and hot links and soda and chips and all the presents, the clothes, the shoes, the CD's, the PS2, yes, all those things are wonderful gifts, but your grandmother's love, ah, that is priceless, beyond anything money can buy. Thank you for a moving story about a happy day, and your insight into what made it happiest for you.

Words From The Wise

i lay awake at night in my bed
 i want you all to listen to what is being said
 i hold my tears back trying hard not to show
 i fight my emotions so you guys won't know
 loved ones, please, don't worry that much about me
 for you will always hold me in your memories
 "when you are facing changes never give up hope
 just use your heart to make decisions and you will
 always cope
 one must be strong to live with success and strife
 i know this know this now by experiences in life
 you'll have many choices you will have to make
 and as many times your heart will be vulnerable and
 break
 despite the pain and tears your heart will always heal
 never give into temptation, don't let yourself be steel
 always open and sharpen your eyes
 for there is never a right time to say good-bye
 cherish your loved ones before it's too late
 but remember everything happens because of fate
 when you find true love, keep it in your heart
 for if you do so this, then nothing is going to tear it
 apart
 whenever you are lost and need a hand
 i'll always be near you to help you understand
 as you live life growing older by the age
 life is like a storybook, each day has a new page
 listen to my wise words for they are true
 these are the things at your age i wish i knew"

-David, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The words of wisdom you share with your loved ones today, are spoken from a heart of love that lost its way. And whatever the price you do or don't have to pay, you will be free to see your loved ones again one day. So raise your head high, but raise your heart higher. Fill your head with good thoughts, and fill your heart with love's fire — mix them both together and change your life with the strength of your desire. The wisdom you share is best understood when married to the living example of your desire to make good. While you cannot change the past as far as the facts, you can change its meaning by changing your heart, mind and daily acts for the better, from now to the last.

I would've changed my life if I knew better

Life is One Big Lie

It feels like life is crashing down on me
 Since the age of a young teen I've been living in the
 penitentiary
 I'm getting screwed over left and right
 It's like a blind man without a sight
 I grew up with a bunch of lies
 I'm growing up right now not knowing how to live my
 own life
 I couldn't look through my own eyes
 Knowing my life is one big lie
 I grew up getting beat to the ground
 I grew up with a bunch of friends
 Now, they're nowhere to be found
 I would've changed my life if I knew better
 Now I'm livin' my life in a treatment center

-Marcus, SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Great piece. It definitely can feel like "life is crashing down" on you when nothing is going your way.. But life is not going to be that way forever if you decide against it. Some things to remember - you and you alone have total control of your thoughts and being... No one can live your life for you... No one can judge you....You are the expert on you. You can choose how you live your life. Choose to live it as a lie. Or choose to live it as the TRUTH.

Crystal Meth

It destroys lives, it destroys homies
 It takes kids from parents and parents from kids
 It takes everything you own, including your soul
 It makes you look ugly from the top to the bottom
 It eats your body and from the inside to the out
 It makes you do things you would never expect to do
 It makes you not care about anybody or anything —
 Not even yourself
 It could get you in risky places —
 Such as the streets and jail
 It could also get you involved with
 The wrong people and wrong places
 Take this poem into consideration —
 Because it is being said from experience

-Pooh Bear, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: There are two things that make this piece rise to the level of a POW. First, you very neatly and directly list the "side-effects" of this drug that is destroying so many lives. And second, you know what you're speaking about from first-hand knowledge, and so every word rings true!

Overdose

My heart beats fast when I snort cocaine.
 My mouth goes numb,
 my eyes start wandering,
 my heart beats faster and faster
 my mind says keep going
 so the last time I did a line my heart felt like it was going to
 stop
 and my mind felt like I was going to die.
 Now that I'm in the Hall my mind wonders what I'm going to
 do
 when I get out: snort coke or turn my life around
 before I turn into a crack head on the corner
 like the rest of the black people I see?
 I snorted four times in my life and when I did it I wondered
 what my mom would say if the phone rang and she got a call
 saying
 I overdosed and died.
 That's why my heart beats fast every night.

-Jeremy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like you know what to do: never snort coke or use any type of drugs again. Seems like you don't enjoy it, or if you do enjoy it, it comes along with lots of real fears. Think of your mom, and think of yourself, and make sure your worst overdose nightmare never happens. The time is now to plan for the future!



Telling My Mom Sorry

It's so hard to see my mom cry because I know it's my fault and I don't know how to tell her I'm sorry. When I try to tell her, I open my mouth and no words come out. I have guilt in my heart that I can't forget. And every night when I think it over, I wanna cry, but no tears come out. So, I just live with the guilt.

-Alfonso, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We hear you, and we believe you. Maybe you can try this. When you are alone in your room, try saying the words softly, to yourself. Say: I'm sorry mom. Say: I've made a lot of mistakes and I know they've hurt you, and I'm sorry. The idea is to practice. If you say the words over and over to yourself, but loud enough so you can hear them, you'll be preparing for the right time to say those words. Imagine how good she'll feel. And for that matter, imagine how good you'll feel - doing something you know you should do, but that's been so hard to do. Your heart is in the right place. Now put your words in the right place. Learn to do it by practicing what you'll say. As for crying - it's hard to force yourself to cry, but next time you actually feel them coming on, the tears we mean, just let them flow. Not crying is a way of torturing yourself, of punishing yourself. Consciously or unconsciously, we all know that crying is a way to release our strong feelings. It's a way to make room inside ourselves for new feelings. We cry because we need to. It's not a question of man hood. Show us a man who doesn't have tear ducts. Can't do it, because all humans have them. We are designed to cry. Give yourself a break. Stop punishing yourself. We always feel better, at least a little bit better, after a good cry.



Broken Window

The broken window is a signal that the party's over.

A photo of the family now hangs crooked.

The new black couch is covered in chalk.

The stairs are stained from spilt drinks.

The refrigerator no longer stands on its end.

A beautiful home now the terrain of a battlefield.

-Jackson, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: One heck of a poem Jackson. It's stark and dark, with the feel of accuracy. The only people left in the poem are in a photo looking aslant on the battlefield. Very, very well done.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

My Blood is Dark

My blood is dark because this of pain that's in my plasma. Doin' lawless things that hurt my soul, burns my soul, also haunts my soul. I always thought my life always evolved around cocaine distribution and gun slingin' like when the white first hit the bay. My blood is dark, it flows from my veins even my heart. But look...

There's hope. All the deaths and shootouts that twisted my brain makes my blood dark and cause me to reap a lot of pain. A lot of people, even Grams, think I'm insane. Then salvation came, God is great, bring you back from head to toe. From brain to blood rich dark blood. I love two people that really care.

But you need to take off the ski mask and pick up your bible and find yourself cause you wasn't born with thug ways and cold days. You was put in this world by the Man with the real plan. (RIP to my boys that fill to blood money. Also known as drug money.)

-Mama's Boy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You know where we find our hope? In people like you, who have seen the darkest shadows and still come out of it looking for a better way to live, a better way to be. It's inspiring to see you write this way, so now take this dream from the skies and bring them back down to earth. What are the concrete daily steps you need to make to get of those thug ways and cold days?

Go Dumb, Stupid, Hyphy

Man, you feel me, that's just a way for us youngstas to express ourselves. Because everything we do, we get in trouble. So going stupid, mean we don't really care.

Go dumb, is a style of dance. Hyphy is energetic, meaning that we got lots of energy and nowhere to let it go. So we express it many different ways: by dancing, poppin' pills, off drank, or something that will get us "feeling ourselves".

Feeling yourself is, man, you just feeling what you are doing and how you are doing it. But back to the go dumb: That just what we do in the Bay — we go crazy, stupid, dumb, retarded!

-Not So Dumb, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, one of the clearest, most concise and articulate pieces we received on this week's topic, and you don't even sign your name to it! Oh well, whoever you are, thanks for your entries in The Beat's pop dictionary/encyclopedia, ephemeral as it may be. You explain these local usages well.

Il the deaths and shootouts that twisted my brain makes
my blood dark and cause me to reap a lot of pain.

Is It In Your Blood?

I would have to say it is. If you grow up, and both yo' parents on drugs, and they never there for you —you end up robbin' people, sellin drugs, using drugs.

It also have something to do with the neighborhood where you were raised. I grew up hanging on the corna wit' all the hustlas and if you ain't got no family, they become yo' family. I got introduced to weed when I was six. I started to do a lot of stupid things as I got older.

When my grandpa died in 2003, that's when I got careless (meaning, could care less): robbin' hella people, hittin' hella house licks, and started carrying guns. It had got so bad at one time, I robbed a man across the street from my mama' house.

Smoked hella weed, drank hella Henn', pop every now and then. Grew up around nothing but violence on both sides of my family. I know the right thing to do, but I'm not ready to change. When I do, y'all know.

-Bra Dummy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: "I'm not ready to change" are, sadly, famous last words before an early grave or that conviction that will take your freedom away for life. Change is harder when the streets ways are all you've ever known, so the sooner you start to change, the better chance you'll have of making it. What will it take to make you ready? A murder charge? Death of your best friend? What?

Nothing In My Blood

What's up Beat you want to know if it is in my blood? Well it's not in my blood. My family are not gangstas or drug dealers, they were crime free but they were broke as hell and barely able to feed me. I didn't want to be like that so I started to do what I had to do. I became a gangsta, a drug dealer. I liked it too it made my heart beat faster.

It bothers me to have to look over my back all of the time. I'm tired of having to carry my nine all the time and I'm sick of doing time.

I realize I should change my ways but I'm scared I won't make it without being a gangsta or a drug dealer. I'm scared that I will disappoint my people.

I hope I can change my life. I pray that I can make it in this life. I pray I come clean cause I have children and a sexy wife. I pray I don't have to carry a gun at my waist. And I pray that my children can play outside without being scared!

-Kasper, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Life is complicated—many people choose a life of crime out of economic need, or just because material things look so good. Your wife and kids need you to make that change, and it sounds like it's what you know you want. We hope you can stand up to the challenge and stand behind you.

*My Life On These Streets of Oakland — Part Three*

(In the last installment of ManMan's story, his house has been raided and the family was being forced to split up. ... here is the next installment of his riveting life story)

Once the lady had took me and my sisster outside of the house, we got busted by the police, everybody was outside crying and stuff. Then me and my sister had hugged and kissed our family goodbye, and then we had crossed the street and got in the car. They had drove us past the police station and then to Jack London. Then we had to stop at this building and got out of the car, and went into the building. We was there for like two hours and they told me and my sister that we was going to a group home.

Then we had got back in the car and go on the freeway going south. Then we went to San Leandro to this two-story house, when we got to the door, this white man came to the door. He told us to come in and we went and sat down. Then the lady had went and some room with the white man. After like 15 minutes, they came out and left and the car that they had dropped us off.

As soon as they left, the white man told us his name was Jeff and said that he ran the group home, and he told us the name of the group home was the Western House. Then he asked us our names, and I told him Clifton, and my sister told him Kimberly, then after he asked us a couple a more questions, he showed us our room that we was going to sleep in. and then dinner had come and me and my sister sat by each other at the wooden table and started to eat. After we ate, we had watched a little T. Then I told them I wanted to sleep in the same room with my sister and they said it was cool, then me and my sister went up to our room and went to sleep the next day.

We woke up and ate, and it was the black man, he told us his name was John, and he had seemed cool. Then like around 12 pm my sister told me that she was going to run because she was 17 years old and she was about to turn 18 years old in two months. She asked me if I had some money and I told her yes. I had like 80 dollars and I give it to her then she had left. Before she left she told me she was gon' take care of me. Well, I was there and stuff. Then she asked the black man staff if he could take her to the store,

Then 15 minutes later, he came back and she wasn't with him. I played it off like I didn't know what she had did. So when the staff had come back in the house I asked him where was my sister and he said she had run. He asked me if I knew where she was going, and I told him I don't know. He told me he would have to call the police to report her AWOL and call our worker and tell her that she had left the group home.

So after he had called the police and the worker and stuff, then I asked to use the phone and he asked me for what. ... I told him so I could call my granddaddy to let him know where I was and have him bring me some clothes and stuff. He let me call, and when my granddaddy picked up the phone and said "Who is it" then I told him it was Man-Man. He asked where did they take me, and I told him where I was in San Leandro. At some group home. I told him my sister Kim had ran, and then asked if she had made it to his house yet, and he told me no. I told him when she came tell her to call me wassap. Then I gave him the number where I was and we hung up.

(to be continue)

-Lil' Man Man, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can't wait to hear how what happened to your sister, and to you, and whether you stayed at that group home. We also want to know more about how you were feeling when all this happened - this must have been a crazy time for you, being ripped from everything you knew, and sent to stay with people you didn't even know, away from most of the people you knew and loved. We're anxiously awaiting for installment three!

Tricks

When you lock a animal up, does it stay calm? No, it gets mad, crazy, rageful! This is what is happening to us. We are being caged up in a cell.

So we got locked up and are expected to be rehabilitated by the time we get out. Right? Wrong! They lock us up to act like the animal we supposedly are in our cells. When you get out, they want you to come back! Too many people will be out of jobs without us to house in prison. When we upgrade from juvi to the big timers, it's even worse. That's more years, rape, violence, etc. — and you slave for ten to thirty cents an hour. What a freaking joke!

Our states would rather put workshops in prisons than in schools! Everyone is making money off the inmates' labor but the inmates. Without us, there would have to be more factories, jobs, and no slave labor. I never understood why we do this to our own people. We will work our ass off for ten to thirty cents per hour, but claim to have too high a standard to work for minimum wage, which six dollars and seventy-five cents per hour. Do the math! Well, I'm out, or else I'd write more. Gotta go, kitchen work.

-Sharky, 150 Crew

From The Beat: All right, the math. Ten cents goes into six seventy-five, sixty-seven and a half times: so sixty-seven and a half hours of labor for one hour of minimum wage when you're in the pen' (but you're glad they let you out of your cell, so you do it). Even thirty cents, is twenty-two plus hours for one hour of minimum wage. Yeah, all this talk about being too good for minimum wage, only to be working like a slave to get out of a cage, is playing yourself like a mark in the system's slave trade. Thanks for your statement of wonder, warning and outrage!

Everyone is making money off the inmates' labor but the inmates. Without us, there would have to be more factories, jobs, and no slave labor. I never understood why we do this to our own people

Is In Your Blood

Yeah, it's in my blood to hustle. It wasn't my family, or not the women in my family. But my father did sell drugs, so it's in my blood line to get money. My father is still hustling on the block, selling rocks. My brother sells rocks. We all get money. It's in us. My cousin, too.

Maybe it's too late for my family, but mostly it's too late for me. I dropped out of high school in the ninth grade to sell rocks in order to feed my kids. I got two boys. I really wasn't taking care of them, but I was at least feeding them by giving their mother money.

In a way, I'm just like my father, but I'm gon' change my life and start over for my sons, and my soon-to-be wife, and my mommy and my sisters. I hope nobody kills me when I get out. I got to look out for my life and stop making the wrong mistakes.

-Young Quez, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you go back to selling rocks, putting yourself out there on the spot like a target, you will greatly increase your chances of getting shot by a rival. But if you change your life, get off the street, get a job — you'll be amazed how quickly your old life in the street will be forgotten. Move on. Stop doing wrong.

My Heart Beatin'

I'm in the store, got clothes in my backpack
'Bout to walk out
My heart beatin'
I'm on the block 'bout to bust a sale
My heart beatin'
I'm off a pill and the narcs just pulled up
My heart beatin'
I'm wit' my ninjas hittin' a lick
My heart beatin'
A car come creepin' up with no head lights
My heart beatin'
That's what would make my heart beat...
But I don't be on that hot shhh
So the only thing that makes my heart beat
Is my mama

-Rhonda GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a great poem. We were ready to jump all over you, to tell you not to do all that shady stuff, that your beating heart was giving you a warning! But then you flipped the script brilliantly, and left us curious about your mama and why she makes your heart beat.

A Destructive Life Is In My Blood

In my family there's a long line of pimps and drug dealers. So I felt I need to become both at the age of twelve. I started selling dope, then as a young teen, my brother tossed me my first prostitute. Then at fifteen she wasn't making enough money so I started prostituting myself and still collecting from her. I never thought any of it to be wrong because my mama was the neighborhood dope woman and my uncle was a well known pimp. So I was born into this destructive lifestyle not being taught to do any better. So in my mind I wasn't doing any wrong.

-Y's Lady, 150 Crew

From The Beat: But what do you think now? Do you thinking differently? Do you have respect for yourself? Or your body? Do you still think that you are doing nothing wrong? We hope that after this experience you will learn how to think different and treat yourself and your body with the respect you deserve.

Going Dumb, Stupid, Hyphy

Being hyphy is not good at the time, cause being hyphy got a lot of young people killed nowadays. People listen to the music and think they can live they life like that.

At first, going stupid started from a dance then everyone started growing dreads. Going dumb opening doors on cars got a lot of people towed so I know they feel stupid and bumed for trying to be hyphy. I think there is a time and place for everything and young kids be too busy trying to go dumb, they don't care about nothing else.

Most people think they have to get off a pill or high or drunk to go dumb. But what if Mac Dre wasn't drunk and high off pills everyday, he would not be where he is today.

So, kids need to realize how they are hurting themselves trying to be the man on the radio and it would take them a long time to get there. So calm down. Be hyphy about wanting to learn something instead of just getting high every weekend.

-Aleshia, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Aleshia, that is excellent advice! There is so much wasted passion. The only thing you are going to get out of drugs and going dumb is - being dumb! Go smart! Thanks Aleshia.

Most people think they have to get off a pill or high or drunk to go dumb

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

The Road To Glory and Freedom

Admiration, regard, concern, detail, to adore someone,
to pay attention to something.
May human become (waste material in the system) so
that it can be used again...

A road to glory, freedom, let it have direction

Become
Correction

To do the same thing in return

Encourage someone to join

The road to glory and freedom

If so break down

Lets reconstruct

Not pretend life

Let's signify

The road to glory and freedom

I walked the wrong way

I seen no help

I was lost, nowhere to go

So I stay

Ordinary

Referring to the stars

We...walking sideways, not directly toward
our footsteps always should remain the same

Only our destination

To a road to glory and freedom

-Lil' Mainy The Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There is a really strong message in this piece, and it is definitely surfacing—your work is gaining clarity and that's great; bring it just a bit more to the surface and your audience will grow because more of them will know just what you're talking about.

Is It In Your Blood?

Is it in your blood?

To be a hustler or a thug

Is it in your blood?

To bust every last slug

Is it in your blood?

To sell every drug

Is it in your blood?

To walk away from gangs guns and drugs

All day I walk the block

With weed in a swisher and selling rocks

But is it in my blood to get away from the block.

Is it in my blood to get away from the cops?

My blood runs like bullets in a chop.

Is it in your blood to get away from the fast money?

It's in everybody's blood to laugh at everything that's funny

Is everybody's blood runnin'?

Is they adrenalin pumpin'

So is it in your blood

If it isn't, people say you're nothing!

-Ally Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The greatest gift of a poet is courage, the ability to speak his own mind no matter what other people say. From this piece and many others, it's obvious that you have it in you to be a real poet, and what's more, to be a real man. Does a real man care what other people say? What really runs through your blood, Ally Bo? We think your blood is a hero's blood. Prove us right.

Doin' Time

Is it in my blood? That's a good question. Well, you could say that it's in my blood to do time. So let me tell you why.

First of all, my dad never made it to the big house, but he did go to Rita a lot, and eventually the judge made him do a year, as his last chance, 'cause he was DUI and in a high-speed when he got blurped. My older brother started here at this juvenile hall. He came here a couple of times, then went to Camp and pimped it; but once he got out, he turned eighteen and caught a strong-armed robbery, got a strike, and did almost two years in Rita for messing up in there.

Then let me tell you what happened next. He got out, stayed out for a minute, then caught another strong-armed robbery — and this time he got sent to the big house (Pelican Bay), and did two years with his second strike. While he was in there, he got stabbed in his chest; and if it wasn't for his patna knockin dude out, he probably would have been dead. I guess the Mexican gangs were mad that he clicked up with the 415 (people from the Bay), so they tried to get him. It ain't no game in the pen', is what he told me and my patna one day. But anyways, he got out like five months ago, with two strikes to his name, and now he bein' cool on the outs, stayin low, but you never know what could happen with the bullshhh three strikes law.

And me I came here hella times, then went to Camp and ran. Did the group home thang, then ran from that, too. Now I'm in max', waitin' for YA to come get me to do some time. Hopefully, I never touch the pen' like my brother did. Maybe I'm gonna change, but maybe not. I don't know, time will tell. So, you could say it runs in my blood, doin' time that is.

-Rae, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Of course, "It runs in my blood" is a metaphor. Committing crimes and doing time, is not genetic; which means you have a choice. It's like a family tradition, or a sub-culture you grow up in, a set of expectations, ways of acting and thinking that become so familiar that they're like second-nature to you. We still think it is unjust to be sent to the Y with no other charge against you but running from a placement, 'cause being around those young men is more likely to harden you in a life of crime than any of the programs are to turn your life around — unless you make a firm decision going in, to change your life! To break the family tradition — none of this: "Hopefully, I don't touch the pen'..."! Sure, it's fine to hope, but you need to make up your mind that you'll do everything you can to make that fate improbable. Your intelligence has always impressed us, and you could be successful in any number of lines of legitimate work and/or you could get that college degree, if only you become willing to set some goals and pursue them. Or inertia will land you behind bars. Take charge!

RIP Cell

RIP Cell man, it's a wrap

They took yo' life

Ain't no coming back.

I miss you to death

And it's hard to see you gone

Now yo' boy feelin' alone.

Sometimes I hate these cold hard streets,

Rest in peace is what I'm gon' say

'till I rest in peace,

Sometimes I want to change

But it feels so strange

'Cause I lost you to this game

Cell we been through it all

It's hard to see you fall.

Thoughts make me want to cry

These memories going through my eyes

Man I can't lie

But only God can judge what he did.

Rest in Peace Marcellus Waley

I love you man,

Sun rise 6/19/87

Sunfall 2/16/06

-Lil' Booda, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can see how much you loved Marcellus by this eloquent testimony to him... Our question for this week was about blood, and thinking about this death makes our blood boil. The homicide rate keeps going up, and more young men keep getting cut down. Partly because the streets are cold and hard, like you say, and anyone can catch a bullet, but also because no matter how many times they get warned, too many young people can't stay away from the game. We believe that nothing would make Marcellus happier than to see you make it out. What would it take to make that happen?

you never know what could
happen with the bullshhh three
strikes law.

on my knees i pray
i'm in so much
pain
knowing you can
go any day
always on my mind

The Life

The life I live is one very different from my family's lives.

My parents are ex-drug users but I'm proud to say they've quit the drug life and have years now clean.

Me I'm still young, but before I came to juvenile hall I quit drugs and I'm clean too. My parents lives were a lot different from mine they had much stricter parents. I've gotten kicked out, ran away, raped, lost my mind on dope, came back, been a prostitute, tested many different drugs, lost all friends, family, and tried to take my life. These are all things I pray my kids will not go through.

Luckily I have my grandparents who took me out of each and every one of those things and helped me now believe in the Lord.

I want to be the one to keep my kids away from these things. I remember one time I was doing too many drugs and I could hear my heart beating and almost died it stopped when I woke up the next day hallucinating because someone decided to lace my drugs. I shouldn't have done them in the first place but that was crazy. I hope nobody else ever has to experience that.

All that I've wrote bothers me so much when I think about it, but I'm glad I don't have to go through those things any more. Also I keep binge eating in here and I can't stop.

-Christina, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing your thoughts with us and it seems like you re ready to change for the better. We wish you luck and hope not to see you again in the halls. We also hope you can find a supportive person or group that can help you address the many things that continue to plague and have scarred your young life. It is so unfair that you have to carry such a weight. Remember, to continue to use your skills as a writer, this is a huge step in addressing and supporting yourself and others experiencing similar pains.

Daughter Like Mother

My mom was just like me or I was just like her either way my mom used to start off with running away, and using drugs, coming in and out of juvenile hall as a teenager, and as a adult she became a severe drug addict and abandoned her kids.

Now when I look back at it I wish I could take everything back that I did to get here, just because my mother made these decisions I don't have to, so when I get out I'm going to change my ways.

-Lil' Goldylocks, 150 Crew

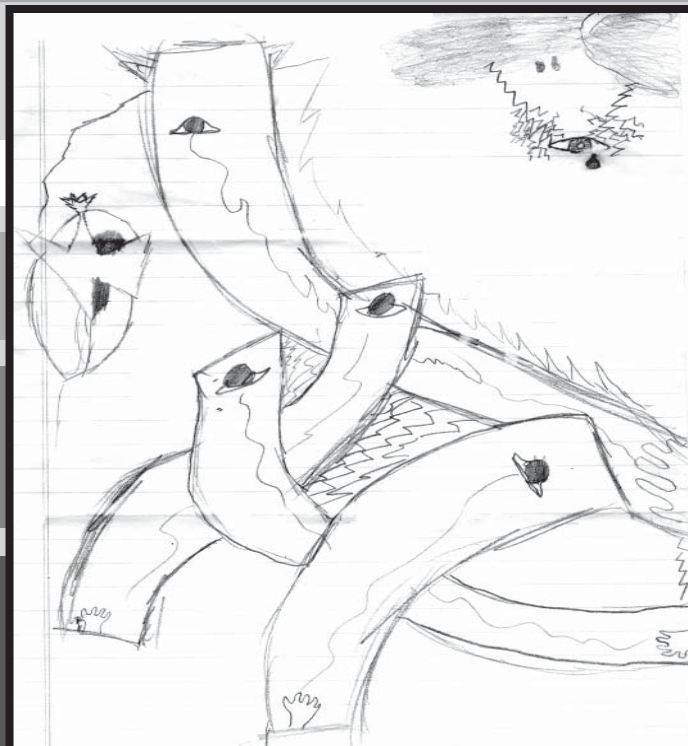
From The Beat: Well, we can't change anything we did in the past, however, we can learn from our mistakes and live life in a different safer/better lifestyle. As long as you know how to look back in the past and realize what you have done wrong, that is the first step towards changing. Solid effort!

Always On My Mind

always on my mind
i don't know what to do
you're dying from cancer
i can't believe it's true
always on my mind
i don't know what to say
i cry almost every night
not knowing if you're going to be okay
always on my mind
it hurts me so bad
i'm not so happy
i'm feeling very sad
always on my mind
memories float throughout my head
hoping i don't get that call saying you're dead
always on my mind
i think of the good times
when my hair used to be hella long
you would braid it in designs
always on my mind
on my face you bring a smile
auntie i'm scared i might not be seeing you for a while
always on my mind
on my knees i pray
i'm in so much pain
knowing you can go any day
always on my mind
i feel i'm in a cave
i see you in my dreams getting wheeled into a grave
always on my mind
auntie it's true
i was just letting you know
i was thinking of you.

-Lil' JT, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It feels like a curse, to be locked in a cell when a loved one on the outs is sick and getting worse. Your fears feed on the dark, and all the memories of love turn into pain deep in your heart. You want to be there to help, but even if you knew you couldn't, you'd still want to be there to show how much you care. Well, at least your poem sends out the love you wish you could share in person. We pray your auntie's condition doesn't worsen.



The Rise of a Hood Star, a Fictional Memoir

Chapter One:

I didn't no what the freak I was thinking, walking up the street where I saw about twelve task force police cars. The officers were on the corner, talking to a group of suspects at the bus stop, and I walked right into the group and told my ninjas they were making the spot hot, attracting hella attention to my hood.

I asked what time it was, and that was when Vin Yet, the head homicide detective in Oakland, told me to turn around and put my hands up. I resisted, and that was when four officers pushed me up against the fence and cuffed me. I started talking trash, 'cause I knew I had nothing to do with whatever had taken place minutes before I walked up. But the head dick put me in a line along with the rest of the large group of suspects, and they threw me in the back of the police car.

After waiting in the back of the car for them to finish wrapping up the rest of the suspects, I watched the cop throw a friend of mine named LL in the back with me. Now LL was the type of ninja that used to stay in the house when we was little ninjas in da hood, so I asked that ninja what was he in the police car with me for? He said he had went on one with his brother, and they had got caught up for robbery. And, I realized, since I had walked up into the group of LL' friends who got caught at the bus stop, I was going to jail with them.

A news van pulled up on the side of the police car, and the camera man asked Ven Yet if there was a possible story here. The officer asked me if I wanted to be on the television news — because today was my "lucky day"! Before I could answer, the camera man started rolling. I was mugging hella hard, shaking my head, going dumb along with the others ninjas that had got caught up. On the news that night, they called us, "the AC Transit bus-robbing bandits", because there had been a string of robberies occurring on the bus line all day that day.

When we got to the county jail holding tank, that's when I met Tae. Tae was one of the LL' friends who had got caught with us. Well, it was more like I got caught with them. Anyway, this was my first trip to Alameda County Juvenile Hall, and I was ready to see what my OG ninjas were talking about when they would say they was so happy to be fresh out!

I told the ninjas in the tank who was actin' scared that I was about to go to jail and act a fool, but after being locked up for two days, I started getting hella frustrated. The police had said I was under arrest for robbery, but when I went to court, the DA was talking about charging me with attempted murder — because one of the ninjas who got robbed on the bus, had been beaten up so badly that he was in a coma and

his face was all broken up.

Then when the judge said that I wasn't going home, but he gave LL an EM (electric monitor) release, I was hella mad! All I could do was look at my dad in the courtroom. I was wondering why he didn't get me a lawyer to defend me. The cold look in my eyes made him see the pain and the anger in me, so he stood up and addressed the courtroom — as if he was my lawyer!

He explained to the judge that there was no way I could have been involved, because during the string of robberies, I was at school — and after school, he had dropped me off in East Oakland at a friend's house. It worked! The judge gave me an EM release also. Because of my aggressiveness and size, I had been put in a maximum security unit where the most hardened juvenile criminals were waiting to be transferred to CYA or the State Pen', and it took three days after my day in court to get my release. Because my family had moved to Richmond, I couldn't get EM at all, so I was released on home supervision.

While in the max' unit, I had come across a lot of kids my age that was in for murder and was not getting out ever or, at least, had a lot of years on they' head. I met a ninja named John, from Acorn Project in West Oakland. He could see that I was not doing no playing because I came in the unit smashing on those that tried to test me. He had told me about a lick (a robbery) that he had planned for eight to ten racks/grand (thousand dollars) plus some. So I got his information before leaving the Hall, and that way, when he got out, we could go get that money! [To be continued; watch The Beat for Chapter Two.]

-Sax, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Oh no! Your story confirms the theory that placing at risk youth in a juvenile detention facility, especially a maximum security unit such as you describe, only increases the likelihood that he will commit more (and perhaps more serious) crimes. That your hero was innocent of the charge only underscores that point. Still, we must say, we fear for your hero's future. Moreover, your story suggests that the likelihood of your hero getting mixed up in more criminal activity was increased by the fact that he felt the need to make a reputation for himself on the unit as a tough and hard, "smashing" (as you put it) on others there. Of course, those who try to do the same thing with their mouths, are subject to the same peer pressure to play out that role both in the unit and on their release. So, now the hero of your story who got caught up for something he didn't do, hooks up with a future accomplice in a robbery they plan together in the Hall. Given that you're writing this story from a maximum security unit now — the same one portrayed in your story — suggests that you should perhaps re-title your story: *The Rise and Fall of a 'Hood Star*, don't you think? All that said, we're sure you have many readers anxiously awaiting the next installment of your fictional memoir.

Is It In Your Blood?

My daddy was an addict
My madre was a drunk
My brother was a patrón
I always listened to them
Thinking I'll be ok
But now my dad's on welfare
My mom don't have much to show
And my brother's in San Quinn
Sitting on death row
So I guess I'm next
I know I need to change
(To be continued...)

-Lil' Snow GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You were not responsible for the family that gave you your earliest role models to follow, so we're not surprised that you find yourself locked up. But as you mature, you are realizing how these models have let you down (just as their models let them down), and it's up to you to establish a new pattern that does not include addiction or violence. That is easier said than done, of course, but with a brother on death row you certainly have enough motivation to change the game you've been playing, knowing where it leads. You have at least three great things going for you, too: 1) you're intelligent, 2) you're a fine writer, and 3) you know you need to change. (By the way, we know a lot of people on death row because of work we've done there; do you mind telling us your brother's name?)

I had come across a lot of kids my
age that was in for murder and was
not getting out ever or, at least, had
a lot of years on they' head.

That Lie

Baby you said you loved me
 Now you goin' Kisha Cole on me
 Dang, I think I should've cheated
 Dang I'm emotionally dyin'
 Every slow song that come on I begin cryin'
 Girl my tears aint lyin'
 You is
 And please don't pout yo' lips
 Yo' boy goin' bead
 And cutie now I don't care
 If you sad
 My heart been broken
 Now it's outspoken
 yes it is cryin'
 And now I'm not lyin'
 You is

-Lil' Mainy The Prince, 150Crew

From The Beat: Isn't it funny how after a break up every sad song is singing your song? We've all been there at least once.

So I Look Across The Ocean

So I look across the ocean
 (in my dreams)
 My love, My soul My heart will remain open
 So that things
 Believe that no matter how far we are
 I'll swim to get to you even if I drown
 My heart will go deep in the ocean...far
 My soul will carry my heart of crown
 So I look across the ocean
 To see if you are lookin from the other side
 I'll stay until sunset then night fall I'll cry in slow motion
 So that my tears won't cry nor hide
 I shall love you more than I
 That's why my heart will die
 Just to meet you on the other side
 So I look across the ocean

-Lil' Mainy The Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your work this week seems much more grounded and focused—we like the use of the ocean in this piece to illustrate the distance the speaker feels between he and this person. Nice work.

My heart beat faster when I walk to my house
 My heart beat faster when I see a police dog
 Why do my heart beat faster?
 Because I do wrong.

My Heart Beats When I Am Scared

My heart beat when I see the police!
 My heart beats faster when they put the handcuffs on!
 My heart beat faster when I sell my last drugs to the
 wrong person
 My heart beat faster when I walk to my house
 My heart beat faster when I see a police dog
 Why do my heart beat faster?
 Because I do wrong.
 Why do people heart beat? Some people do wrong and
 think it's going to be all cool and groovy, but when they
 find the real deal they cry on they knees.

-Shally-M GU, SF/YGC

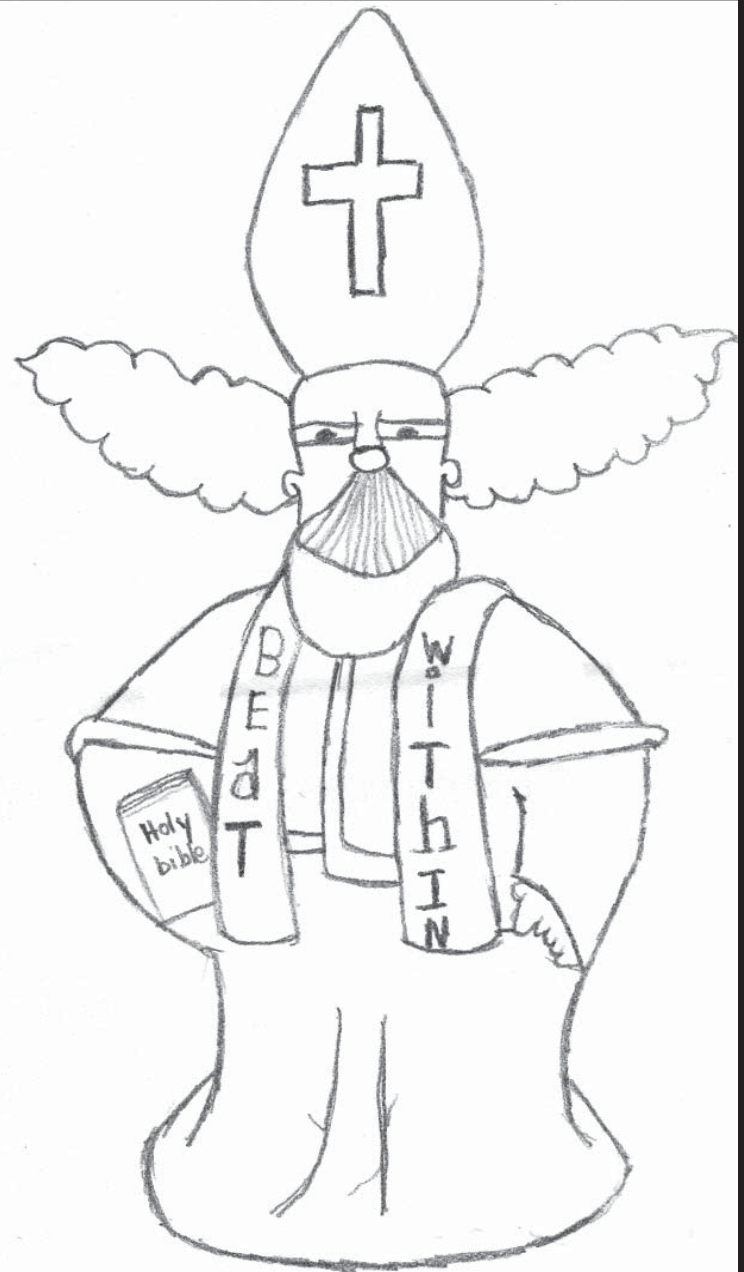
From The Beat: Does your heart only beat when you do wrong? What about when you are excited out of happiness or love? And if you are scared enough to have your heart beat faster every time you find yourself in a situation that involves the police, why not change your act so that the police have no reason to have anything to do with you?

Fear

Destiny
 Where's my male parent who is consulted for advice
 My shadow is next to me
 Worshipped by my obsession
 I fear beyond nightmare's death in my generation
 I fear life
 That automatic sacrifice
 More than livin'
 My fear
 Only if death could disappear
 Live the life I ask for
 Like a person who eternally live

-Lil' Mainy The Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So many of us fear life and living it—and many of us are just fearing the end, which is so hard to believe must come for everyone. Nice piece.



You Wonder

You wonder why I'm so depressed
It's probably 'cause all this love got's my heart so
compressed
I bet you wonder why I cry at night
It's 'cause I wish I could hold you so very, very tight
You wonder why I get so mad
It's probably 'cause the things you do make me feel so
sad
You wonder why I get so angry
It's because everyday I wish you were right next to me
You wonder why I want to be your man
Well, I'll try to explain it the best way I can
I bet you wonder when I'm coming home
I bet you wonder when the next time I'll call you on
the phone
You probably wonder when I'm going to get out so we
can be together
But what I wonder is will you love me forever?

-Marcus, SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Sometimes it's hard to express our thoughts and feelings to the ones we love. It is always important to be honest with those important people in our lives. Though it may be hard to talk about and express some things on your mind, it is the healthiest thing to do. Sometimes, it can be really uncomfortable to talk about our true, innermost thoughts and feelings. One great way to let someone know how we are feeling or thinking is to write it down in a poem or letter. Try it...

Demons

Demons in my head, in my mind
Lord take them out, free my mind
Unspoken words, unthoughten thoughts
Inside my head
I'm pleading to be freed of them
Demonic principality
Always claiming to be me

-Kalisa, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: What makes this a standout in our mind is that instead of wishing you weren't here, you're looking to understand the causes that brought you here. We don't know where your demons come from, but we do know that unless you turn and face them directly, you will always need to find a way to escape — and constantly looking to escape leads to drugs and an unfulfilled life.

A Lot Of Things Bother Me

I got a whole lot of things that bother me. One of 'em is fake people. Seems like everybody is smilin' up in your face, but they be talkin' shhh behind your back. People who can't keep it real is something I can't stand. One minute they tryna act like your friend. The next minute they talkin' shhh.

Man, another thing that bothers me is stereotyping. Just 'cause I'm Asian, it don't mean I'm smart. My worst subject is math! People say Chinese people got an accent. I don't even speak Chinese! People say that Chinese people got slanted eyes. I ain't even got none 'cause I'm half Japanese! I don't even listen to Asian music. I don't kick it at Chinatown. I don't even kick it with Asians!

See, what bothers me the most is people who got things twisted! People mistake me as a Chinatown chick. They mistake me as a quiet girl. They see me as a smart girl.

-Lil' Cheesecake GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Stereotyping people because of their race (or any other outside characteristic) reveals the ignorance of those who make those judgments. We have heard them all, from Chinese are so smart to Chinese can't drive. People who make statements like that probably don't know anyone who is Chinese, except to see them and make their snap judgments. All we can say is just be yourself — and when you hear those stereotypes being stated, stand up and make your views known! Otherwise, how will these ignorant people learn? Which brings us to our last question: Do you ever stereotype other people?

I Cry

Before I went to RTC, crying was for girls and I only cried when I was hit. Even when I was at the RTC, I hardly every cried. The staff said I was emotionally dead because I never cry. Now I cry when no one is around because people think crying is for girls and I have a hard time showing my feelings and don't know to share my feelings with other people and I don't like to talk about them.

-Vincent, SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: It is good that you are able to release your emotions. If you need to be by yourself to cry, that is understandable. What is important is that you are expressing your feelings appropriately and this shows that you are a caring and sensitive individual as well as smart because you know that if you don't express your feelings appropriately then maybe inappropriate actions will endure and it will hurt worse in the future

Hatas And Snitches

Things that really just botha me
Some things that I really just don't like
So many haters that I'm incarcerated with
That no matter what I do, I just ain't feeling right
An' everywhere I turn, there's a snitch before my eyes
I know that there ain't really anything I can do
But to I sit in my box as I wait to finish my time
I know it ain't easy, but this is my life
I chose this path in the beginning
So my life is now messed up

-Chex B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Have you spent time trying to figure what you would really like to do with your life when you get older, Chex? If not, you should start now in the direction that your life is headed. The fact that you recognize your own actions put you here is a good sign that you are ready to sacrifice some things in the here and now in order to get the life you want in the future. Are you ready to do that?

Man, another thing that
bothers me is stereotyping.
Just 'cause I'm Asian, it
don't mean I'm smart.

You Can Always Change

If negative influences run in my blood, that doesn't have to do anything with the way you are because you can always change the way you are. You can always change your habits. I am going to change because it can benefit me in the future.

-Eric B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What made you decide to change your habits? Whatever the answer, we're very glad you've opened your eyes before you get so deep in this criminal "justice" hole that it's almost impossible to crawl out. Even though this is a very short piece, it's packed with wisdom! Now you have to follow through. Don't let yourself down!

Lil' Ma's Life

Through ups and downs my world goes round
 Through thick and thin it ain't the end
 Through love and hate I celebrate
 My life, complicated
 My life, situated
 My life, loved and hated
 So beautiful, exciting, interesting,
 Unbelieving
 So smart, intelligent, bad choices are evident.
 My mistakes are learned from
 My goals are wisdom
 This is my life and I walk it
 This is my life and other than God
 I lead it.
 This is my life, my life,
 I run my life.

-Lil' Ma GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: How do you run your life when you're locked up? When you're in here, is "running your life" more a feeling than a fact? Or does it mean that you are using your time in here to give yourself a plan for success on the outs — a plan that will mean you never have to have anyone designated "staff" running your life again?

Reality

I don't ever like y'all topics. So I'ma write my own. A lot of people have been leaving B5. Hella new people comin'. Only like seven or six people have been here for about as long as I have been in here. It just kina makes me wonder how people just get caught and how they feel when they get caught up. Makes me wonder about the day before I got in here.

Just finished gettin' two cameras and my friends was tellin' me the cameras was worth over \$2,000 each. Me and the three other people that did the thing was talkin' about how we would spend the money. You know, buy some markers, some cans, hella stainers and shhh. Go buy clothes... just hella shhh.

We was all at my house and I was tellin' them we should bounce, but they was like, "Naw, just chill here for, like, two hours," 'cause the incident happened down the street from where I live. Twenty minutes later, the police knockin' at the door and "Price" opened the door. Hella people was in my house that are always into something.

I remember bein' out there hopin' for sunny-ass days just takin' buses around San Francisco bombin' shhh, just keepin' to myself, not really trippin' about nothin'.

REALITY CHECK! My ass has been in B5 for about three months and at YGC four months. I haven't seen clear sky since three months ago. I haven't seen any of these sunny and perfect days that pass by daily without a double-fogged window or a fence in the way. Even when I'm out in the bird cage the fences over head break my thoughts and my memories from wandering too far. This is shhh. I need to get out. I can't even get hard regularly no more 'cause I think about women too much.

It's gonna be a good day when I'm finally free, no wires attached. I'ma make it a good day. I'm gonna use the \$8 in my personals and go buy some shhh at Walgreens. I'm probably gonna end up stealing some shhhhh, but I won't get caught. Till next week...

-Meen B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Reality check, indeed! You begin your piece getting busted for stealing cameras, and end your piece imagining your first day of freedom stealing from Walgreens. Instead of ending your piece "Till next week" you might as well end it, "Till I get caught." Seriously, Meen, what makes you so much smarter than all the friends we have doing long stretches in prison because they weren't going to get caught?

Listen Up

Well, how's everyone today at the Beat? Hope good. Well I guess I'm coo' up in this hell (I been here for 49 days on this date June 6, 2006). And I have court on June 21, 2006.

I'm tryin' to leave, and the group home I ran from is letting me come back, but it's taken too long. Let me tell something to people that keep comin' back: it's goin' to get harder. I'm tellin' you, you goin' be here longer, go to group home 'cause that's what this system is doin' to you, they playin' wit' yo' mind, heart, and everything you got going good for yo'self...

Y'all think this is all a game, but this shhh ain't no game 'cause one day you going to see yo' ass up in 850, CYA, YGC, prison, maybe somewhere worse. Do y'all want to keep on coming here and do time (maybe for some stupid shhh), tell me, huh? Do you even know?

Well right now I'm stressing so I'm going to end this. (Keep yo' head up) and be coo'. Do what you got to do (mucho amo... much love) Also wanted to say w'at's up to all my homeboys.

-Jessica GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You give some good advice for the other youngsters in the hall, and we know you are speaking from experience. So what comes next in your life, Jessica? Since it's very clear that you know where messing up on the outs can lead, how are you going to stop comin' back here?

A Short Version Of My Life

When I was three, my mom stuck a magnet to my dad's head. I remember it well. When I was five at school the teacher made all the kids try eating asparagus.

At 12 I was molested by my own disgusting dad. That's when everything started going bad! When I was 13 I got pregnant, then I had an abortion, then at 14 I got pregnant again and I had him. He's two now.

At 15 I got pregnant yet again and I had her at 16. She's 10 months now. Now I'm about to be 17 years old and I'm locked up. They won't let me out. I got a misdemeanor that's a year maximum time. I got court on 6/13/06. Pray for me and wish me good luck so I can be with my kids.

Thank you for reading this. I'm out. "Peace, love, and soul!"

-LaRonda GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Were all your pregnancies the result of being molested, or were some the consequence of consensual sex? If you agreed to have sex with any of the fathers of your children, then we have to say you need more than good luck, you need some good sense! There is no reason at all that a girl in her teens should be getting pregnant when there are so many safe and effective ways to protect yourself. Not only that, if you are having unprotected sex then you are definitely at risk for STDs including AIDS! (Don't forget, when you're having unprotected sex with a boy, you're really having sex with all the partners he's ever slept with. So don't wait for good luck. Take some responsibility for yourself!)

I Miss

I miss being home...

I miss my family friends...

I miss my own clothes...

I miss my bed...

I miss eating whatever I want whenever...

I miss taking a shower in peace...

I miss not going out...

I miss the fresh air...

In the end

I miss all the freedom I had!

-Li' E B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We bet! This is a simple, but very effective piece of writing. This place is designed to make you miss all these things so you won't want to come back. So, hey, look at the bright side, you'll be back to all those things you miss, so stay with it!

You Think

Why do everybody in the streets think they hard?
Just because you be on the streets does that make
you a thug? Nowadays every body walks around like
they got an "S" on the chest. Because they been in the
streets...

They think they just make everybody do as they say.
Everybody think they the one's that gets to call all the
shots.

But I'm here to let you know...
Just because you think you the man...
I'm-a tell you that you ain't.

-Lil Milie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Lil' Milie, being in the streets is ugly, it causes people to be selfish, violent, cruel and obnoxious. Standing up for yourself is one thing, but talking about showing off and trying to be a shot-caller is just going to make you look as dumb as the ones you are talking about. Think about your actions. If you allow yourself to get distracted by how others act, then you will never get to develop yourself. Be smart - and think before you speak, because truthfully the man with the "S" on his chest would never do what you are doing.

I'm Eighteen and No Dummy

Hey, what's up, Beat? It's yo' boy, Brainiac, coming at
you from Camp! You know, I'm just up here waiting for
my release date so that I can be home with my family
and just get my money the legit way. You know?

Well, I ain't gonna be coming up here to Camp
anymore after I get released, 'cause I am already eighteen.
And to tell ya the truth, all this crap ain't worth it, 'cause
you will have to pay the price! You feel me? It's like, "If
a do the crime, it will catch up to you and time will be
served for the crime." That's how everything is up here.
Everything has to be accounted for.

But what I have done in life, I do regret very much,
'cause not only am I in jail — family is doing time there
with you also. I mean, not in reality, of course, but since
you aren't home, they can't have peace of mind and
relax, 'cause they know that you are missing from the
household — so the family is broken apart.

So I want ya to think before you react. That's what I
try to do now. All right. Late.

-Brainiac, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The trick is to carry what you've learned here back home with you. 'Cause outside of here, people believe just the opposite: do whatever you can get away with, and you can get away with practically anything if you're slick enough. But nobody is slick enough to get away with it every time, and after a while the strikes start mounting up. Let your record end in the juvenile system. Why keep making the same mistakes as an adult? If your friends or family members do, you can't stop them. But keep a careful eye on your own thoughts and actions, 'cause you know better, Brainiac.

What Bothers You

What bothers me is being in jail. I can't stand being
locked up because it keeps me away from the people and
things I like to do. I got to eat this nasty food man, I could
just keep going on and on but the most thing about jail
that bothers me is when my parents come and visit me. I
can't stand looking at their faces all sad about me being
locked up. That shhhjust bothers me but I'm gon' stop
here, 'cause I'm getting bothered just about me writing
about it.

-Diego, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Writing is a two sided sword. Sometimes it releases that stress, sometimes it just reminds you of all the things that hurt. But even know, we're grateful to you for writing this down, because there's not a soul in in these halls who hasn't felt that same sadness you describe: seeing the pain on their loved ones' faces on visiting day. And you had the courage to write it down even though it hurt, and anyone who reads this will nod their head feeling the truth of what you wrote. When we know other people feel where we're coming from, it makes the burden a little easier to bear. And you did it. Bravo.

My Dream

Once I had a dream that I was with my girlfriend and that we
were getting married and had children. But her family didn't
like me because I was poor and look like a gangster. But it
didn't keep me from being with her because she loves me the
way I am. But then she was gone and then I woke. I had that
dream twice. And now I'm in here, locked up in juvenile hall.
That's not bad, but the worst part of being in here is being
without her. I miss her much.

The only thing that makes me feel better is that she gave
me a kiss before I came in here and then she told me that
she loves me and that she wants to be by my side.. That's
what makes me feel better - knowing that someone out there
cares for me and loves me. When I get out of here I'm going
to try to change and try to be a better person, and stay out of
this place.

-Raul, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Sweet piece, Raul. Love is a healing power. But don't wait until you get out to start changing. You can start today. Do something kind for someone, every day you're in the hall. Kindness alone is enough to change you. Remember - be kind, everyday, to someone.

Until It's Gone

Sometimes you don't realize what you have until it's gone.
Sometimes you can get it back. Sometimes you can't. So
instead of getting worked up on the things you don't have,
you should appreciate what you do have, and if it means
something to you, do your best to keep whatever that is,
before it's too late.

-Sam, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This sounds like the voice of experience talking. And the talk is good.

The Courtroom

Once again I'm comin' at you straight from max. I just
wanted to speak on what makes my heart beat faster: Sexual
intercourse!!!

Next is steppin' in that courtroom. Seein' my family and
loved ones. I can't really explain, it's just seein' my folks.
I'm fighting with my back against the wall right now, ain't no
telling what comes next. So just steppin' in that room gets
my heart poundin', just like that first time hittin' that Thai
stick. It had my heart thumpin', palms sweaty, and my eyes
dry. Adult court ain't no joke, I'm glad I'm leavin' tambien.

I ain't trippin' off my heart beatin' hell fast, it's just
lettin' me know the game ain't over. I got several dead homies
and I'm still here. So with that stated, this vato gon' strap up
my county chucks and go out with a bang.

-Young Shorty, 150 Crew

From The Beat: As you fight that case with your back to the wall, as you write (as usual) with such strength and grace, don't forget that no matter what, no one can take your soul, not unless you let them.

What Makes Your Heart Beat Faster?

The call from your PO telling you a warrant was issued
for violation of probation. The loud beating on your door
at 1:00 am in the morning when the cops come. The rush
when running to the first hiding place you can think of.

The sound of sirens before you reach the hideout.
The ride to Hall.

The nervous feeling before entering the court room.

Last and definitely not least, the excitement when the
judge says you can return back home.

-Sticky, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yes, those are all good examples Sticky. Are these examples all something you have experienced in your young life?

Fast Heart

Generally, what makes my heart beat fast is running from the police when I'm under the influence.

I will share one occasion when this happened. I was sitting with a couple of very good homeboys at a spot I thought was safe, when all of a sudden, a police officer, who had snuck up on us from around the corner, said: nobody move. Well, I moved. Everything happened in a flash. All I saw was the cop pull out his gun and yell: take 'em down. I ran for like twenty minutes along the side of a river. Finally I got to a safe spot and I thought my heart was going to jump out of my chest. That's the kind of thing that gets my heart beating fast.

-Jackson, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: That would get anyone's heart pumping fast. You could have been shot, it sounds like. You need a different "influence". Why not try writing? You're really good at it.

Last Time

Dear Beat, this is Lil' Neph writing for my last time in The Beat! I've been here for seven months now and I've learned so much from being here!

I got to go to court on Friday, so I hope I get out on no probation because I've been doing a cool program in here! And today is my birthday, I'm eighteen today. I called my lil' brother today and he said that moms and pops can't wait until I get home.

I can't wait to see my parents, my sisters and my brothers! It's only two days until I'm able to go home!

I want to thank The Beat for taking the time to listen to what I've had to say these past months! And I want to give a special thanks to Allan and Danielle for everything that they've done for me! And another special thanks for all unit staff that has given me words of wisdom! And any other staff that took the time in their day to sit down and give me some game about life and that there is more outside the circle and explore what life has for me! Well, I soaked up game like a sponge from the time that I've been here so now it's time when I get out to squeeze this game out on others that are headed down this road!

Well I'm out on paper but not in spirit, so keep your head up to all out there and stay strong and focused on what your goals are!

Thank you Beat and Juvenile Hall staff. I'm out, one love.

-Lil' Neph, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Congratulations and happy birthday. We're so glad that you've learned so much and made the most of your time in juvie. Good luck on the outs—stay strong and don't come back!

Another Day

It's another day that the Lord has made. We shall rejoice and be glad in it. See! Another day that I wake up in camp. See! I'm glad about it. One reason to be glad: Somebody laid down last night but didn't wake up this morning; yet He allowed me, and you who are reading this, to wake up to another day — and it wasn't because we were so good or so holy!

It was the goodness of His grace to allow us to wake up this morning, and we need to start thanking and showing him that we are thankful. Another reason to be glad: Anywhere above ground is a good place to be. I wake up and look forward to this week, so I can go home every weekend and see my family.

But those that don't know what to do, do this for me. Pray to our Father which art in heaven, and, trust me, he won't leave you or forsake you. He won't put more on you than you can bear. And remember this is another day that the Lord has made and be glad in it. God bless.

-Rev.Do, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You do preach the message loud and clear, and anyone able to hear what you're saying and feel it, will see that whatever burden he or she bears, if we but count our blessings, it our burdens become lighter. When we open our eyes to see, we may find a blessing in the simplest things — food in our stomachs, the sight of a bird flitting from limb to limb, even the act of writing words that give voice to our feelings whether rejoicing or lamentation, can be a blessing that carries us through troubles.

What Bothers Me

People that think too much of themselves.

People that talk the talk but can't walk the walk.

People that say they are your friends, but when you're gone, they talk crap.

-Alfonso, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Yeah, that bothers most of us.

Happy and Having Fun?

The lifestyle that I live runs in my genes.

Almost everybody in my family is or was in gangs. So when I was little I thought bein' in the gang was the best thing to do. The people that were doing good in my family seemed so miserable, because they were always so serious. They never had smiles on they face or seemed happy.

They made it seem like good was bad and bad was good. Then a lot of people that was doin' good started doin' bad. All the ones that was in the gangs was always happy and havin' fun — with a gun and a pocket full of fun.

-Keith, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a short piece but it's chock full of insight — on the surface, the gang lifestyle does seem easier: less work, more cash, lots of partying, looking cool... people who have to go to work every day and struggle with their lives on a legit level.

Without These Elements There Wouldn't Be Hip Hop

Hip Hop is based on the five elements: breakdown, DJ (disc Jockey), MC battle, graffiti, and dancing. That's what made hip hop come alive, and that's the real history of hip hop.

A lot of these youngstas don't know the elements, but they think they know what hip hop is. I'm here up at Camp Sweeney representin' hip hop and the fifth elements. Well, B-boying, tagging (graffiti), disc jockeying, and dancing, I'm reppin' four elements, not quite yet the fifth element.

Just trying let The Beat know what real hip hop is, 'cause I know a lot of people think it's just a group of thugs rapping and some females shaking their ass — but it's really not. To all you that knows and rep' the fifth element, y'all some true thugs.

-Mien Boi, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So, when you say someone's reppin' the fifth element, you mean all five elements of hip hop, like, reppin' hip hop to the fifth element. Yeah, a whole lot of youngsters don't know the history of hip hop. But wait, doesn't "breakdown" mean break dancing? So there are two distinct hip hop dance styles?

Life

I been living this life scared, not living life, but takin' life for granted and not going to school. Sellin' drugs, hittin' licks to get fitted from my head to my toes. I rob the liquor store pull a gun on an OG after a hard days work and a hard earned pay check is that the life? No — live life right, go to school, make sure you stay cool, do what you got to do. Life can be taken in a blink of an eye.

-Leon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We couldn't have said it better. So, what should life be like? What alternative can you offer those that are headed down the wrong path? Life is precious and should be treated that way.

It Bothers Me

What bothers me is when cops' workers and social workers put me in group homes that I don't want to be in.

Just because you make a few mistakes in my life they lock me down in level fourteen group home. I hate how they label you in there with the problems that you have and treat you like a normal teenager. Like for instance, I had a nervous brake down because I was overwhelmed with the problems that I had in my life. So they label me as psychotic, pretty much of a crazy person. They have no idea what I been through.

So, they keep you in there when you do the smallest mistakes break a few rules you get nine months, some people did a year or two in there and that place is kind of like jail. That made it worst for me because when I got out, I ran. That type of environment would make it worst for somebody. It doesn't help me at all.

-Depree, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That is frustrating Depree. What do you think would be the best situation for you? Can you suggest something that would be beneficial to you? What about your nervous breakdown? Do you know what caused it? Life is full of obstacles. But, you must learn about yourself and try to understand what circumstances will allow you to grow. Be patient... what do you want?

What Bothers Me

-What bothers me is waking up every morning in the same place (Juvi).

-What bothers me is being locked up like a damn animal.

-What bothers me is eating this nasty food they serve throughout the day.

-What bothers me is to see all my homeboys stressin' like me everyday.

-What bothers me is not to be able to talk to my love ones and family on the outs.

-What bothers me is leaving my ten-year-old-sister behind with no man or dad, when I was the only one there.

-What bothers me knowing that my whole family is locked up.

-What bothers me is to see myself follow my dad, brothers and uncles footsteps.

-What bothers me is that when I started messing up, I lost the love of my life.

-What bothers me is taking showers next to strangers.

-What bothers me is going to keep bothering me for the rest of my life if I don't put an end to it!

-Soldier, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Those all sound like things that would bother anyone. We feel for you, and hope that you can put an end to it. In fact, we believe that if you try and you work at it, you can. So many of us get stuck in patterns and it seems like we inherit all of the problems that our families suffer with. Recognizing the cycle you're in is the first step.

The Hood

The hood is good,
the hood is back,
the hood will have you feeling there's nowhere you should be.

You can get money in the hood,
you can get killed in the hood,
know that.

You get all of the good and the bad in the hood.
So do what you do and get it how you live.

-Baby Lou, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nice rhyming. You can make the hood better. There are people who REALLY love their blocks. The ones who try to plant roses in the concrete: Build community centers, help the old ladies do their grocery shopping, clean up the garbage, watch out for the children. Do you have THAT kind of hood loyalty?

Heart Went From Beating Fast to Faster

When I got that one under my belt, I was hella high and drunk. And this ninja kept getting on my nerves, 'cause he was getting too much money on my block! But when I told him it was not good for him to be over here anymore, he felt since he had a choppa in the bush and he was older than me, he could disrespect me by calling me a "b".

So I left and went into the apartment to my fat brother. I told him what was up and my brother threw me out the forty-five. I got into the stolo van and pulled out the parkin' lot an' drove around the building. When I spotted him in front, my heart started beating fast. I felt my adrenaline was pumping. I pulled up on him and open fire. I hit him four times.

And his friend who had been laughing when he called me a b----, I hit him two times. He was crawling and screaming. My heart went from beating fast to faster. Then I felt like it wasn't beating at all.

-Young Sax, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is an ugly story, that stands as a warning to all those who think that getting high and standing on the corner is a game. Another one of our writers, who had hoped to change after his release, told someone to stay off "my spot or I'll kill you." When the guy came back, he did. Now one is dead and the other incarcerated for life. If this didn't make you change your life, what will it take? You're in max' now. Use this time to rethink your life and what you're doing with it. (Your brother is not your friend, however much he may love you.)

It's In My Blood

i've had it in my blood
since i was lil' comin' up
i can't really say what it was
or even who i got it from
but i guess it's what
turned me into such
a lil' demon
fiendin' fo' drugs
money and women
to leave me leanin'
it ain't genes
and it's definitely not cells
fo' real it keeps me from goin'
to heaven and to hell
and no matter what
i probably still will
end up next to the furnace in hell
it's made of different types of things
problems, rap, and dreams
that maybe one day
someone'll look up to me like a king
i'm not a gangsta, pimp, or hustla
i'm a ruler comin' up wit' fate
to manipulate
yo' mind state
and switch it up
i'm not a bad guy
i just keep messin' up
i'm half heaven and half hell
i guess that's what's in my blood

-Buddamilk, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There is no such thing as half heaven and half hell, but if you marry the two, then there might be some hope for you. 'Cause if you follow your heart's desires, you will eventually learn from your mistakes, like that the desire to be a "ruler" is straight fake — and a gangsta's pimp and hustle in the end always proves to be less brain and more muscle. But you claim you'll still end up in hell, then that heavenly part of you is just something you try to sell. 'Cause when it's real, in the end it dictates a feeling heart's zeal, and that's for real.

Prayin' to Make Another Day

What makes your heart beat faster?
 My first time I had sex
 What makes your heart beat faster?
 When it was time to let another ninja know what I
 bang and let him have it.
 What makes your heart beat faster?
 When you tell a ninja to lay it down.
 What makes your heart beat faster?
 When you're runnin' from the cops and hoping to not
 get caught.
 What makes your heart beat faster?
 When you know it's time to close your eyes at night
 and prayin' to wake up another day.
 What makes your heart beat faster?
 When you in the middle of a shoot out and that could
 have been you that got hit.

-Jeremy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You run down all the highs and lows of that adrenalin flow in this great little poem. It shows everything about life on the street, and the adrenalin rush of living a dangerous life. We can't wait to read more of your writing. That line about closing your eyes at night is so deep too - no one should have to live with that kind of slow-burning dread.

Heart Beat Fo' A Few Days Straight

I was on them East Palo Alto streets, posted up on the streets when it was funk season, an' sweep season.

Sweep season is when police trying to shut thangs down. Well, it started on a Tuesday night, when me and a couple of my ninjas was in the back of the dead-end, busting a couple of knocks, and the rollers hit gates on us. We was armed and all had D on us, so we got on.

Then the next night, I was on the block again. This time I was out there to the neck getting money! It was night time, and it was a lot of people working on the streetlights. I busted a couple of knocks, when five-oh jumped up from behind the gates and started chasing me. Once again, I got on — but was scared as shhh.

Next night, on Thursday, when my cousin, Lil' Shawnnny, came home from Camp, we was on our street, smoking and getting money. After a while, we got hungry, and Shawnnny wanted to go to JJ's Chinese Restaurant to get something to eat. So he did. But before he left, he wanted to trade guns with me. So we did.

While we was trading guns, five-oh was behind the gate watching, but we didn't know. So he left went to go get the food, and while he was gone, I walked back into the house — and five-oh, the team, the red team, surrounded the house and shut down the area. I tried to get on and run through the back yard and through the cuts. I had jumped behind my people's house when the team came creeping with M1-16's and snatched me up. That was a time when my heart was beating fo' days straight!

-Kudah Black, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You tell a heart-beating story that's nothing but anxious fear, money-making, and more anxious fear, ending with your incarceration, where the anxiety slows down to a daily wrestling with dreading the time you're facing (but that's another story). So, was it greed that had you out there on the third night? 'Cause you say you made mucho money on the second, and you knew it was "sweep season" — not to mention funk season. It sounds in your story like it's a life you're tied into, to the point where you hit the spot every night, regardless of what happened the night before. They say "obsession and compulsion" are the defining characteristics of addiction. Obsession: you can't stop thinking about it; compulsion: you can't stop yourself from doing it. Your story makes it sound like you were addicted to slanging D on that spot, and maybe addicted to the drama and the rush that intensify during funk and sweep season. Now the other thing about addiction is that even though it's your brain talking to you and telling you what to do, it's a brain controlled by your addiction — almost like a demon possesses your mind while the real you gets lost inside: deaf, dumb and blind; at least till the addict's high-risk game has ended in straight pain. And that's when you can open your eyes, when the addict brain doesn't want to face the mess and can't think of any more lies that impress.

RIP Grandpa

To grandpa: I miss you, I love you and I should have took the time to come see you. When people say don't miss them till they gone, that's how I feel, all alone. You have been there for five generations. I'm sorry I was not there for you in your time of need.

Shhhh, I'm behind these walls and I can't do shhhh now. I got time to think about what I have to do with my life, and I'm going to stop hitting these licks, and start looking for a job. I hope I get out to see you laid to rest. I love you and I hope you look over me.

-Phil, 150 Crew

From The Beat: No one in the Unit will ever forget hearing this piece read aloud. We're so sorry you had to lose your grandpa, and even sorrier that it happened when you were locked up. But don't worry, he knew you loved him, all he ever wanted was for you to have a good happy life. He's gone, but his love will be with you forever if you carry it in your heart.

I Bless the Day That I Found You

Out of all the girls I've loved before.
 Out of all the stages I've been through
 Out of all the places I've been to
 I bless the day I found you.

I bless the day I found you and that's my word.
 There's nothing for me out there in those streets
 You took my heart and you set it on fire.
 And now my love burns forever.

You keep takin' me higher.
 I been lookin' for love in all the wrong places.
 And now I finally found someone who cares for me.
 No matter the storm it was you who helped me face it.
 And now it's safe to say that you really care for me
 Just like the wings you took me and flew me away.

And now the ground is underneath my feet.
 I had nowhere to go then you gave me direction.
 And now the rest of my days I can't help but give you my
 praise

You saw my needs, forgave my faults.
 You cleansed my heart, you changed my thoughts.
 You brought the sun into my life when my world had
 seemed dark.
 And you're the only one who was there when I needed a
 friend.

You're the only one who can bring joy when there's pain in
 my heart

You're the one that makes my heart beat faster

-J-Live, 150 Crew

From The Beat: These love poems you send your girl are straight lyrical — but now we have to ask you, how are you going to make sure that when you get out, you can start living that love instead of writing about it? For next week, we'd love to hear about your plan for success, either in poetry or prose!

When My Heart Beats...

When five-o comes I run and my heart beats fast.
 When I felt nervous, and when I smoke weed, my heart
 beats fast,

When I be off bo' my heart beat fast.
 It is like whatever I do my heart beat fast.
 When I hear gun shots my heart beats fast.
 When I see blood my heart beats fast.

-Lil' Ant, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Just reading this poem made our heart beat fast, actually it almost made us feel like we were having a heart attack. We wondered if you ever get a chance to slow that heart rate down, to ease up, to feel peace. Have you ever wondered what it would be like to feel peaceful, calm, safe, happy? There's something to be said for a slow heartbeat!

Keeping it Real!!

Man, what's up y'all-- this Lil' Glen. I haven't had a chance to write y'all 'cause staff keep on locking a ninja in his room. I came here to tell you some real shhh. This gangsta shhh I got in me it ain't in my blood -- but then it is. What y'all don't know is that I was born in it not sworn it now you can go against it or you can join wit' it, you feel me? My mom does crack and my pops got shot . Grams is still with me but I ain't gon' lie, I ain't 'bout to neva change.

I don't think I'm just keepin' it real Beat. You ninjas gotta feel me. Welcome to the life of a young thug ninja. I only hang around them criminals and drug dealers. A, Beat put all this in, don't take nothin' out. Fake ninjas need to hear this.

-Lil' Glen, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sorry Glen, we did have to take some stuff out. We can't have you hatin'. Also - we think it's terrible that your father got shot, and even more terrible that you are willing to stay in such a miserable situation. We do appreciate the fact that you're honest about how you feel - but we don't think shooting, thugging, or dealing drugs makes you a "real ninja." It just makes you a person who is willing to help take down his own people. You've suffered and you know what it's like, so why would you want to add to the suffering? The time is now to show some leadership and get yo' ass out of this pit you are in, you can do it if you have the will! We're pulling for you to see some light!

Underground

i'm grimy
life is just timing me
girls is lying to me
so i'm packing my thangs
and heading out the door
don't frown
just because i'm waving goodbye now
i'm having a rage of fear
mamma i need you here
to hold me near
and to keep me from dropping these tears
i need you to hold me tight
while i fight the souls that i see at night
they tell me to do wrong
but i want to do right
i feel the need to grind and take over
but that's just telling me
that there's no angel upon my shoulder
and that the devil wants me to be hurt
six feet deep and covered with dirt
left with a smirk
ha ha, it's funny
i went out for the money
now i see myself played like a dummy
please bring me back to life
while i struggle with strife
stuck with a knife and a bullet in my head
now once again i'm dead
with no sound deep underground
labeled
why — 'cause i do get down

-Ti Baby, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Don't be alarmed to discover there's a civil war going on undercover. Deep in your chest, your heart is conflicted, there's a war going on over your very existence as a human being with a life to live and dreams to pursue. Nothing good will come if you keep doing what you do. The negative thoughts won't disappear overnight, the devil will keep trying to trick you out into the night to bust knocks and dodge cops, but the devil will be there laughing when you're the one to get dropped. There is an angel on your shoulder, whispering the truth in your ear, and now that you're a little older, you can focus your mind and listen to hear you what you need know. You just wrote it all in this poem, and that's your angel trying to guide you back home.

Followed The Steps

it's in my bloodline
i followed in my family' steps
and every last one of my brothers
was in the game
and so i thought it was cool
for me to run the streets too
and so i started selling drugs
and robbing people
and so i had got caught
for robbing someone
and here i am
in this lock-hold right now
stressing in this lock-hold cell
and so i'm thinking i'm never
following my brothers' footsteps
and so i'm out peace

-Yo' Boy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Be the one to break the chain that hands down the life of incarcerated pain from father to son, brother to brother, and man to man. Now you've had a taste of the price, and it's nothing nice. So show your brothers a better way, and if they ask you for advice, just say, "It's never too late to change, unless you like living your life in the rain."

Going Dumb

Going dumb is a spiritual thing. For instance, when you're at church they have a choir. When the choir sings, Christians begin to do the "Holy Ghost Dance".

When Hyphy music comes on, youngsters "Go Stupid, Go Dumb" and get very, very hyphy. Like church, it's for the Lord, but outside of church, you do this thing called "Goin' Stupid", to rap music.

-Young Tay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Young Tay, very interesting comparison. What do think about the terms that we use? The "Holy Ghost" refers to something spiritual, holy and out of this world. "Going Dumb" is going dumb?

In My Blood

Hustling runs in the family, you can say that — but my dad was a track star before he passed away. I do know all of my cousins, my brother and my step-dad are all hustlers though. Still, that doesn't mean that I'm gone make that my destiny, just because I sell drugs, or sold drugs shall I say. I have a goal beyond hustling, and that's my education. That's the only thing positive standing over my head and my sanity, my destiny, my life.

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Knowing that you're going against a family "tradition" shall we call it, can be an aid in maintaining vigilance in the choices you make. It's always hard to break away from what everybody in your family is doing, and even harder to stay away from it after the break. Don't wait too long, no better time than now to practice staying strong.

A Lot Of Stuff Runs In My Blood

My mother is a gangster and drug dealer.
My father I do not know,
but from what I heard, he was a big time drug dealer.
Is that my fate?
No, my destiny is up to me.
If I want to do the same as them, I can,
but if I don't want to, I don't have to.
I can do whatever I want.
My fate is what I make of it.

-Juan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Very true. However, it takes more work to break the mold than it does to follow it. We urge you to take the right path, but don't underestimate the courage, strength and determination it will take to break free from your family history.

Decisions Shape Lives

Everything may happen because of fate, but it is mainly our decisions that will shape our lives. So we must remember that with every decision comes a consequence.

The people that get second chances are considered lucky, because some of us could just ruin our lives with just one simple mistake. That's why most people say that life is precious — cherish it the best you can!

-David, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes the immediate consequence of a decision is the opposite of the long-term consequence. For example, steal and you feel rich. Keep stealing and you end up locked up with empty pockets, or no pockets at all.

My Life in Oakland

I go back and forth about the machine.

I cop, I cut, but never brag.

I travel to pick up loot from my employees.

I live in Oakland and play the game

I own what I own and do what I do.

I provide the need and work the promoters

I am what I am and I am from Oakland

My life is good, when I get out I'm back to normal with my connect

My name is Kip and I love the truth, so you reading this. Pray for me and give a boost.

I dip and claim a set I stay wit' that protects me and where I'm from you stay together. I hope you feel what

I feel, 'cause I told you my life in Oakland. So peace for now.

-Kip Boy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: As you see, we struck the name of your set from this piece. We almost wanted to cut the whole piece, because for god's sake, this life you claim, this life you want to turn back to, is going to take you down one day. We know you saved your brother when those bullets came, but did you also think about the fact that your lifestyle is what put him in danger? This life you call "good" is bringing down ruin on yourself, your loved ones, your community. We love your writing, and we know that you have better in you than this.

Gang Banging Runs In My Blood

Since I was young I always hung around gangsters. I was taught all of the things like never snitch and never befriend those who oppose. I was taught never to fear and if they run up to you swing instantly because they are suckas. My cousins always told me to keep my head up and to care less about what anyone says unless they are talking about my hood.

I was also taught if someone disrespects my family to take off instantly.

When I was younger I had got jumped and my cousins told me we were going to find them. And when I did I was going to have to fight the youngest of them. If I didn't they would beat me up for giving the family a bad name. So fight for my hood and family name.

They also taught me to never get stepped on and if I did to fight them. What makes my heart beat faster is when I am afraid of going to juvenile hall. But while I was here I learned that this son of a chick ain't nothing to be afraid of.

-Pelon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: As you write this piece Pelon, you are being stepped on by the criminal justice system, so what are you going to do about it?? Tell us! You ain't doing shhh, are you? You need to do more than just kick back! Don't treat it lightly because the more times you come back to the hall, the more likely you are to do hard time in CYA or the pen. Probation is set up for you to fail. So look at it hard. Don't think about suckas or turf or pride. Just think about freedom — because that's something they CAN take away from you. Use your intelligence and fight the powers that be!

Which Path Am I Going to Take?

What bothers me is that I can't change my lifestyle. Every time I turn around I end up in the Hall. Every time I'm in the hall, I tell myself and God that I'm going to change. I been in the hall five times and I say the same thing every time.

But soon as I step foot on solid ground, I go back to my same ways, selling drugs, smoking weed, hitting licks, etc. Sitting in here really bothers me.

But it's never too late to change. But to keep it real, I don't know. But I think it's time because life is calling. Life is getting too real.

So which path am I going to take, positive or negative?

-Malik, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You know what? You have a big advantage over 90 percent of the people who are locked up, which is that you DO keep it real. Some people try and play it like they love the life, others play it like they're going to do a 360... but you tell the truth, which is that you're split in two directions and you don't know if changing is what you really want, or can do? Here's one thing you could do, you know you have the gift of being able to be honest with yourself, so use it now. Ask yourself "What's my goal? What do I want for myself in the future? What kind of life do I really want, deepest in my heart" And then tell us what it is, we'd love to hear about in the Beat. Once you know your deepest hear, you'll know what kind of life you really want to have.

Athletic

Almost everyone of my family members on my father's side of the family played one or more sports at one point in their life. I think that the athleticism of my family was passed down to me.

My father's father played semi-pro basketball. My father played basketball in high school and college. He also ran track for a couple of years.

I am usually good at every sport I try. I am best at baseball. I am not the best at basketball but I am pretty good. Being a good athlete is what runs in my blood line.

-Brandon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Being a natural athlete is a wonderful gift! We hope you get back to school soon so you can win and be apart of many victories for your school and yourself.

My granny took care of me and my brother all of our lives because my parents and my granny use drugs but she's trying her best to stop

What Bothers Me

What bothers me is when you got people that's your friend one minute and when other folks come around they act different. Is it in my blood? No, but my brother did it and we didn't know what he was doing at first. But he started bringing like two pair of shoes home everyday and a lot of jewelry. So I knew he was hustling so I wanted to start doing it and getting new stuff like my big bra.

I didn't realize that it's hurting other people's parents, uncles, aunts and stuff like that. I didn't care at the moment but as I kept selling I thought to myself. That I didn't want nobody to sell drugs to my granny. My granny took care of me and my brother all of our lives because my parents and my granny use drugs but she's trying her best to stop. I live with my dad now this is his fifth year clean and sober so that's it, peace.

Lil' Cleave, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing your story with us! What is it that you want next for yourself? You know what your family's strengths and weaknesses are. What are your own? How great that now you are with your father! We hope you get out soon so you can spend more time with him.

What Make My Heart Beat Fast

When people I don't know are around me with guns, because you never know what people think about. Because I know some people that will shoot you for being in their sight at the wrong time.

Also, when I encounter the police because you know you might go to jail or they might jack you up.

When I hear about one of my friends getting shot it make my heart beat fast really fast.

When you hear gun shots you wonder is that your brother, cousin, friend it makes you wonder you start to get scared.

-Dirty Nell, 150 Crew

From The Beat: How many times do you have to hear gunshots and feel that fear before you take a stand for your community? Before you say to everyone, let's stop the killing? Ask yourself what you can do, as one young man, to stop the fear. You have the power to change lives, Nell!

Moving On Up

It's in my blood to keep my head up and stay strong

I always tend to stay out of trouble so I could live long

Life is hard but I'm living it to the fullest

Trying my best not to get hit with a bullet

It's in my blood to get back up when I fall

I'm on my way up 'cause now I'm in the Hall

-Poet, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Keep spitting out these flows and lines and your days in the hall will pass with no time! Tell us your definition of "living life to the fullest."

It's All Bad In My Blood

It runs in my blood to be a gangsta and a hustla. All of my cousins, aunts and uncles are from a gang. Most of them taught me from a young age to sell drugs and hate the rival gangs. I learned a lot of things from them. Like drugs and fraud.

When I was younger I used to do a lot of the stuff the they had taught me. I also used to be involved in gangs a lot when I was younger too.

Now that I'm older I calmed down on a lot of things. I like having the knowledge that my family gave me. I think it's good to have street smarts in my life.

-D's, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yes, it's always good to have street smarts and you can always apply those street knowledge in the future to better yourself in society, however, if you keep living the life you are, then it doesn't matter how much knowledge you have, you are just putting it to waste. Even though gangsta or hustla might be in your blood like you said, that doesn't mean you have to live that life.

One Sad Lie

One sad lie was today because they told me that I had court today. And when I woke up this morning I was so happy that I was going to have court and that maybe I was going home with my family and to school. I was so happy that I was going to change my life. I was supposed to have had court at 8:30.

Then it was ten and then it was three. I asked what had happened and was told they would check. They told me a mistake had been made and that I wouldn't have court until the 30th. That was very sad that they let me my hope fly high and then let me fall. That felt bad but I kept my head straight.

-Raul, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We're sorry for the mix up Raul. You know, it probably was just that, a mix up, a mistake. We doubt that they misled you on purpose. We're glad that you kept your head straight and acted with maturity. That's a good sign that you are already changing your life.

What Bothers Me?

me not being here for my family
one day somebody pulling a gun out on me
it already happened before
and it was about two inches from me
so that's what i am bothered about

-K, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Get out the street life! Get a job and live right, and the chances of getting a gun in your face, are all but erased. Stay on the grind, and there will be another time.

Sports Run Through My Blood

Sports, athletes and athleticism are what runs in my blood. It's almost like, as soon as I was born, God touched me and told me that I was gone play college ball.

My eldest brother, Damien, played football at Tam and later on at College of Marin. My second eldest brother, David, played football at Tam also, along with basketball. He later went on to play at Southeastern or something Western in San Diego, and my brother, who is the third oldest, played basketball and football at Tam. He went to Santa Rosa JC.

Though all of my brothers initially went to college, they never graduated. As a matter of fact, I can only think of one who did in my family, and that's my cousin, Bryant.

I want to play college basketball and graduate from college, and hopefully continue my career in basketball, and make my mom proud of me.

-Garland, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You go, Garland. It doesn't sound like you regard getting into some kind of mess, getting arrested, and going to juvy as a serious impediment to your plans for an athletic career, but has it done it any good? Can you work out, practice basketball during your rec time in juvy? Whatever, you're still not able to go to the school gym or to the neighborhood park to practice shooting hoops, right? We just hope you'll be free soon and back on the blacktop. Good luck!

That System Lie

The lie that I was told was I cut my EM and my EM counselor called me and told me to turn myself in. At first it took me a couple of days but when I did they told me I would get out for turning my self in. Now I'm on my way to camp for six to nine months. What a lie they told me.

-Alboo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That sounds like a tough lie to take. We're sorry someone misinformed you, and we wish they hadn't gotten your hopes up—or that they had been telling the truth—but it seems like aside from the lie, you played a part in creating the situation.

This Fear Is Trapped Inside Of Me

Cops rollin' down the street
Making my heart beat faster
Then it seems
That all this fear
Is beginning to trap inside of me
Not knowing what to do
But flee
Then I start runnin'
But my heart is racin'
Now I'm facin'
Jail time and probation

-Nima, Marin

From The Beat: For some people, maybe you, just the sight of a policeman makes their hearts race, even if they aren't doing anything wrong. When fear gets trapped up inside you, it's natural that you either "fight or flight," meaning you either stand and try to defend yourself or run like hell. Next time you're out, if you stop doing whatever you do, you can watch the cops rolling by and just smile.

Who Are You?

no who is you
or really ask
who am i
am i who
you think i am
i am not
i reply
i am not
i cry
but i stop the pain
the pain
it runs through my veins
but i change
'cause i know
who i am not
but who i am
i was taught

-Lil' Bra, 150 Crew

The Beat Within: The process of change requires you to go over who you were taught to be, take the best and leave the rest. This, too, can be a painful process. Some pain is a warning, keep doing this and it will hurt worse, and it means stop doing this. Yet pain can also be like muscles that are sore when you first start using them, and it means, rest a bit, keep doing it and you'll get stronger. Mix these two up, can either have you wrecking yourself while thinking you're getting stronger, or letting certain parts of you get weaker 'cause it hurts at first to start using them again.

Going Dump, Stupid, Hyfee

What going dumb, stupid, and hyphy mean to me is that's a way people now a days like to dance. So people even take drugs just to go stupid, and hyphy.

To me I don't take any drugs to go dumb stupid or hyphy, it's just in me. I don't go stupid just to tell you the truth, I just like to dance, when you dance it don't mean you have to show your ass that's when they start to go dumb as they say. But me I keep it at a limit 'cause I really don't like to do all that stuff. That's just not me to do all that and get tired or run out of breath.

I say to people who don't know what stupid, go dumb or hyphy mean. I just tell them that that's a way of life here in Oakland. The people see it on T.V and just go crazy then they just try and do what they see. But I tell them some people take all types of drugs just to go dumb, stupid, or hyphy. So that is that.

-Romell, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're glad you don't take part in the drug-taking aspect of going hyphees—it's definitely not worth reaching that state when you have to poison your body to get there. We appreciate your take on the subject.

Father's Promises

father you promised that you was
gon' put me under your wing
you also promised that it was going to be good
but now i have a gash in my finger
from this street life and these thug ways
father you said it was gon' be better days
but it's not — no thanks to you
father i trusted your word, respected your mind
and i didn't know that you would break your promise
i forgive you like my people forgive me
they got faith in me, you get faith from me

-Mamma's Boy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Is your father an OG? Did he promise to guide you through the street? The problem with a gangster's life, is nothing ever planned by day ever goes that way at night, or not for long, in any case. Promises made yesterday change shape overnight, 'cause unforeseen circumstances tyrannize a gangster's life. Find another way to make your pay, and keep faith. 'Cause a gangster's promise is forever but lives only for a day.

Happy Birthday Cell, RIP

Damn bra, hate to wish you a happy b-day like this but I got to look at the good side: you in peace. You already know it's going looney (as we would say) today, but as you know a lot of the bras ain't gonna be able to for you but you know we're holdin' it down in the hall at camp and at ROP.

Nineteen years old you will be turning. Damn we miss you. It ain't the same. Mom's is holdin' on. Your daughter's doing good but you already know this next summer we makin' it up for you bra 'cause this summer ninjas ain't gonna be out. But in your memory ninjas gonna start doing the right thing no more coming to the hall, no more licks. It's still some bras that ain't listening so I ask you to watch over them bra and also us because ninjas hate when we start to shine.

I still don't know what happened that night. It's good 'cause I know you gonna tell me one day. Love you bra and happy birthday may God rest your soul. Rest in peace, Cell.

-Naudie Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Naudie Bo, we know you're still figuring out how to handle this enormous grief of losing your friend. But if you sit still and listen to your heart you will know that hurting your "enemy" will not take away your pain, it will just cause more pain for your community. Please "do the right thing", and look for healing inside yourself rather than out in the streets.

This Pain

sitting here staring at the wall
another lonely tear falls
i'm tryin'a write you this song
but i can hardly see the page at all
'cause it's breaking my heart
when i look into your eyes and i don't see
me anymore
when you're all i'm living for
baby tell me that you still believe
that you still love me the way i love you
if you take your love from me
you know i will die
'cause i'm not ready for goodbye
baby please pick up the phone
tell me i'm crazy
i got it all wrong
i don't know what i'm gonna do
i don't know how to live without you
you are the first soul my heart ever heard
and baby i believe every word
you are my heart
my soul, my world
baby tell me that you still believe
that you still love me — still love me
the way i love you — the way i love you
if you take your love away from me
you know i will die
because i'm not ready for goodbye
every breath that i take
every beat of my heart
you know it's all for you
i wanna hold you
i wanna love you forever and always
baby tell me that you still believe
that you still love me — still love me
the way i love you — the way i love you
if you take your love away from me
you know i will die
because i'm not ready for goodbye

-Mien G-Money, 15 OCrew

From The Beat: We hope this song works is magic charm and keeps your love safe from all harm. So many incarcerated youth are facing the same anxious fear as the one you're expressing here. Fearing to lose their loved one on the outside, they know they are not ready to say goodbye. We wouldn't be surprised to see your poem copied into letters that get sent out next week, 'cause so many of our readers feel what you feel.

About Time

is time a crime
when you do the crime
can you do the time
is crime really a crime
is crime just a word for us to do time
what is time is time a "good time"
or time a bad time
the time is wound up and goes
back and forth back and forth
it seems like the clock hands are going backwards
although they're going forward
on the outs i control my time
but inside a juvenile hall
my time tries to control me
but i try my best to not let the time do me
i spend my time educating my mind
by reading and writing on these beat lines
but when i get out i wonder
if i'm gonna have more time
to catch up with my family and to rest my mind
but now i'm gonna end my poem
and as you real criminals say
"it's just a crime, i'll do the time"
and more

-Tay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Good time usually means fun time, like "I had a good time at the party." But really good time is when you use your time to educate your mind — and your heart, too, 'cause when your heart's confused that's when you abuse your freedom, make bad decisions that bring you into collisions with the law until one day you fall. Now that's a bad time, till you start to use your mind to see you way all the way through to: Don't do the crime, don't do the time. 'Cause in the future, your best times will be when you're outside day and night, doing right, happy, joyous and free!

Bad Girl

This girl named Jazza I was with, she was not cool. Let me tell you, she was the kind of girl that smiles in your face and do some messed up stuff to you and everybody was telling me to keep an eye on her but I was like "what they talking about? That's my girl," so I wasn't trippin'.

So I was with her for like five months and she was smiling all in my face and givin' it to me whenever I wanted, so I wasn't even thinking about her or thinking some messed up shhh.

People told me she was a gold digger, but I never had one that tried to get me for some money so I wasn't trippin'. I thought they was hatin on me so one day we just got done havin' a lil' fun and she cooked me some food and all that and I was feelin' good, but I was still a lil' sleepy so I went back to sleep, but I wasn't all sleep like she thought I was, so I heard the buckle of my belt on my pants and I thought she was just being nice and putting my pants in the closet, but she was makin' a lil' too much noise so she put them back down. So I was like, what was she doin'? She then went to the bathroom so I checked my pants and she took the eighty dollars I had in there. I was thinking why would she take eighty dollars, that's nothing?

I'm not the kind of person that hit on girls, so I called my sisters and she got herself beat on for eighty dollars and after I seen her after that, I was like, it's bad, I'm out.

-Stoneface, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's definitely not fun to have someone you trust steal from you, but do you think you could have handled it differently? Without calling your sisters to beat her up? It seems like you just played into the cycle of dishonesty and mistreatment.

Trippin'

what's up — yeah i get down
what do you expect
i'm turf born and bound
i got a habit of popping pills and smoking weed
can't nobody in this world fulfill my drug needs
but my girl can keep me pleased
by filling my pockets with the green
hell i like it better when she look mean
that's just lettin me know she thinking of that dream
life is short
i never respected the ninjas that snort
don't nothing go in my nose but oxygen
living life to get killed
or go to the pen'
it ain't coo' in these oakland streets
yeah you heard about oakland in the beat
we all get down but this time is still blinding me

-Tl Baby, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This poem is about as sad as any we've known, writing like a boy seeking fame instead of a man full-grown, celebrating the very things your life has shown will take your freedom or your life — and then you complain about the time. Yeah, the street is mean, so wake up and change your scene. You think that was has always been must always be, and that's how you seal a tragic fate with certainty. Follow your girl's dream, get off the street and up out the ghetto. Yanahmean? We cut your other piece, 'cause it has no more redeeming lines than these.

I'm Glad To Be Here

I'm glad to be here.
I woke up this morning,
I'm glad to be here.
I can see and hear,
I'm glad to be here.
I can walk and talk.
I'm glad to be here.

I share all the time that somebody
laid down last night but didn't wake up this morning
and He allowed you and me to wake up this morning.

We are supposed to be glad about it.
See, we need to stop and think these days.

Even though I'm here up at this Camp,
I'm still glad that I'm here.

I'm not glad that I'm here at Camp,
but I'm glad the God allowed me to wake up this morning.

I don't know about anybody else
neither can I speak for them because I can't;

I just know I'm here for me.

You that are reading this
don't go out and do something stupid.

Stop and think first,
and start thinking positive.

Start thinking about where God brought you from
and what he's done

and you will see there's something better than
that bad thought you had in your head.

When you are going through something
then call on Him and He will guide you through it.
Remember He will never leave you or forsake you.

God bless.

-Rev.Do, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Maybe you should be glad you're at Camp, because put you there (1) to show you a big stop sign when you start thinking about doing what you were doing that got you here, and (2) to give you another chance to figure out what you need to do to insure that you won't go back to doing it again ('cause next time your placement could be far from home, or even the Y). Sometimes things that seem bad are blessings, if we can truly learn our lessons. You show us your faith every week, but how did you come to let go of it when you were last outside running free?

I Gotta Cry So

I cry so million
 Never had what you given me
 I rather dream wit' your scintillation
 I cry so billion
 In my life I dream it all and spade my emotions to
 feel in
 I cry so thousand
 You set me free and I really been holdin' on
 You took me as who I am from my good and wrong
 You hold my past to spade
 I cry so hundred
 In expression my heart and soul verbally
 Meeting you gave my life purpose
 You're unsung but famous in my life
 I love you more than myself
 I sacrifice
 I must stay loyal to my soil
 You are so unique
 Has sparkle lauder unobserving
 I cry so ten's
 The truth you keep the tears kaput to begin
 Again
 I catch every call back...being alone aint all that
 That's why I cry
 So that I understand my purpose to try
 Not just because I cry for reason's I need love
 There I trust ...my place in shower my emotions
 I'm a young man tryna stay open
 I only close my eyes'
 Only so I cry

-The Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Being alone is really hard, and the search for love and acceptance is one that everyone experiences in some way. We all deal with it differently, some of us through writing. Nice Piece.

One Night . . .

One night me and my patnas were out, most of us were drunk and thizzing. We in the Tenderlion (District) in San Francisco and I got into an argument with a rival gang member, he said everything was cool.

So, me and my crew do it moving and like two hours later I see the same guy mugging me, so I take off on him. He gets up from the ground and stabbed me in my stomach, my heart was beating so fast I felt like I was going to faint or die. I don't really remember what happened but I woke up the next morning in the hospital with eighteen stitches on my stomach.

-Unknown, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Damn, that's crazy. You've got to be careful. How do you get yourself in this kind of situation? you're lucky to be alive. As you sit in jail tonight, think about your life... How long can you go on like this? Life shouldn't be this way. Is there another way?

What Bothers You?

What bothers me is - that my mom told me when I was little not to make bad decisions when I grew up. And now that I am fifteen, I look back at that day and wish I could travel back in time because I made my mother suffer a lot, in the last three years.

-Unknown, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are only fifteen. It's never too late to change your life. You are still so young. Now is the time to change! Every decision that you make will determine where you will be three years from today. What can you do to get your life back on track?

The Gurl Who Broke My Heart That Was Already Broken

What I remember about us
 Was dreams reality of faithfulness
 Your skin touchin' mines so jealous
 Yes I'm confused
 It's like I'm being alone abused
 I tried to pave our souls
 Which is where my love holds to prove to you
 That I love you...so dang true
 What I remember about you
 Was love that could be drunk safely
 I look at the sky listen to R&B man I been cryin'
 Lately
 We had so much strength
 Relation wit' relationship.
 What I remember about us
 Is now sentimental recollection of the past
 I wish to ask
 But I'm hurtin' slowly
 Just punishment from which I can't escape
 While sky at night blue and stars glow
 I cry day after birth of date
 What I remember about us
 Was truth and so much lust
 Now everything is new
 So selfish at first everything was so simple
 U leave me in a sad way
 And all I did was want you to stay.
 What I remember about us
 Was love causing me death
 Makin' me extremely happy...now I'm alone
 With nothing left
 Now I explore
 To state that no blame should be attached to me no more
 I gotta show feeling
 It's my only definition of healing
 What I remember about us
 Is what I regret and all that we had is now rubbish
 Wit my heart you said
 Now I'm blind in the shadows of lookin' for love
 Full of emotions
 What I remember about us..
 Is already spoken
 There is no us.

-The Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Breaking up is never easy. You start to think that all of that caring didn't even exist and that you imagined what that person was like. It takes time but you'll get over it.

*Now I'm blind in the shadows
of lookin' for love**In My Blood*

This life that I am going through is the life that my brothers went through when they where my age. My father was a gangster in his days and I guess my brothers got inspired by his gangster image and all the money he was getting.

Me, personally I don't feel like I have to follow my family members footsteps, but I choose too because I like what I see - and what I mean by that is, the money, girls, cars etc...

-Unknown, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are in jail. Look around you - is this part of the lifestyle that you want? Did you forget to put your freedom on your list of things that you want? Money, girls and cars are things that you can get other was than gangbanging. Your dad and brother may have not been very good role models for you, which only means that you've got to step up and take care of yourself. Don't gamble with your life. Be smart. Think about it - Peace.

It Ain't Easy!

What it really be Beat?

Rest in peace Marcellus, may God rest your soul bra.

It's all bad where me and my bras come from. Oakland! The town. Ninjas losing their lives, cars, wallets, and freedom, shhh all! The goods in there houses, what does it all come down to chelow (money) that's all we ever wanted but no it ain't coming easy so what you want us to do be a paper boy, sell lemonade, cut grass, wash cars? Forget that shhh. I rather run through your big pretty four story house with the extra car in the front. Or post on the corner 'till the sun comes up, now how does that sound?

See we like that fast life. Money and I'm not talking big faces I'm talking racks on top of racks. My little bra only thirteen just got out the hall a month later not even he have flipped four or five scrapes and got a stack. So you mean to tell me you gonna get that selling twenty five cent cups of lemonade? Hell naw, bra, man. But at the same time you have to worry about your freedom being taken. But most of the time all ninjas think about is getting it getting it, getting it. I mean this shhh been going on in the town for awhile, but my generation kicked it up a notch, hold on, hold on, a couple notches fast! And sorry to say it's gonna be hell to pay come next generation, shhh it's all we know.

To all the fallen soldiers RIP!!!

-Lil' Naudie Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have so many valuable stories to tell! We know it's hard out there. We know the choices aren't easy, because poverty makes it hard to make decent money and the street makes it so easy to get big money fast. But you're talking about the problem: freedom. Don't be a slave to the street. It's a trick. The street makes you feel free, just like drugs make you feel high. But you really aren't high, and you really aren't free. What can you do for the next generation, to protect them from this cycle? Your wisdom is power!

sorry to say it's gonna be hell to
pay come next generation shhh
it's all we know.

Scared of What?

What am I scared of? Nothing. Because if I get killed, I just will die, but I want be scared about it. Going to jail? I won't be scared, because ain't nobody going to touch me. I ain't scared of nobody in this Camp or on this earth.

But I am scared to leave my grandma, because she will go crazy if I don't be there; so I am scared. To lose one of my brothers? I would be mad, but it won't happen. I am scared to get in trouble, because I want get to go home and see my brother and sister. So that is what I am scared of.

I am scared of guns, because they can kill. So that is why I am not going to get a gun. I don't want to hurt no one, and I don't want nobody to hurt me. So, that is what I got to say to the Beat.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: At first it might be hard to understand how you could say you're not scared to die but you are scared of guns. But then you explain. And you're not scared of jail, but you don't want to be separated from you grandma, for her sake! Some of these mean-masking fools need to think that stuff through, 'cause being locked up is not cool, being separated from family. Getting into trouble is, therefore, something to be scared of. You got it right.

Why I Won't Leave Them Oakland Streets

It's all we know. It ain't no thrill to us to walk around all day and night with the RIP hoodie. That shhh ain't fun to us. It's just the streets of Oakland, which led us to smoking, poppin', drinkin' and sitting there with all the bras plotting on the next come up.

I never think about how much fun I'm about to have. The only thing I want to have is all your money and what ever else you got. And yeah ya'll might say it's wrong or it's the devil but what do I say? It costs to be a ninja in Oakland.

And to all you rap stars; Too Short, E-40, Mac Dre, forget you all! You all wasn't speaking on that back in the 1980s and '90's. All that turf, shhh, swang, go dumb, shake them dreads mark ass ninjas been biting. Ninjas ain't been putting in work. We got on the map our damn selves even if it was on the news or newspaper. You ain't doing me no favors talking about blow the whistle. How about blow some money. Shhh you ain't even got to do that.

Just come to the town one good time without all your guards and cameras so I can strip you and make you tell me where you live so I can smack your face. Other than that take yourself back to Hollywood /LA and all that other stuff 'cause all we're gonna do is download some music very fast.

They're always asking me if I think about what the people go through about me taking their hard earned money. Hell no should I work hard for it. And the only good come back ya'll got is look where you at now yeah no shhh, I see where I'm at, but you can't hold me down forever.

-Lil' Naudie Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've got a lot of reasons to be angry. Thanks for sharing your honest anger with The Beat! It's not fair for us to ask you to give up the streets, so we will never do that, we just want you to see that you do have a choice in the matter, but please know that our reasons for challenging you to see a better way is that we want you to live a long, free life. Keep teaching us about your struggles.

Why Am I In Here

Once upon a time there was a young man named Demetrus. He was doing okay around the house. So one day, Demetrus' friend came over, called his phone to come outside, and I, Demetrus, came outside. And then we went somewhere by the store to get something for us.

So after that, I went home and laid down. Then he called me to go meet him, so he did not have to walk by his self. So I went to meet him, and I walked past this house where I seen something black. I looked and saw that it was an iPod, so I picked it up. Then I seen the police coming, so I threw it, knowin' that was it! And that's why I'm in here.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Oh man, what a sad story, getting caught up for picking up an iPod you found lying on the ground. But now, what was it you went to buy over by the store (not in the store, mind you, but by it)? You could have been caught up for that, too. We're not saying you deserve to be here, but that it's usually not just the one thing you get caught for — it's a life style you have to change if you want to stay free. Even though anyone can get unlucky at any time, like you did in this sad story.



In Ten Years

What do I want to do in ten years? I want to be in another state with my girlfriend, so that I won't get in trouble with other people. I would like to get a job and take care of my people, so we can live like a happy couple and get married and one day have a child together.

And with that good job, I can go to the car dealership, and I can get a mini-van so my family can go out with me when I leave home. I want us all to stay together for a long time. Yes, and I will go to school and learn to be a masseur and make a lot of money for my kids to inherit when I die, so they can move on even when I am not there any longer to help them. And while I'm living I want to provide for them and help them make choices so they do not get in trouble like their pop's did, chasing money the wrong way.

I do not want my kids to grow up like me, because I was doing some bad things that I shouldn't have done. That's why I will give them my best advice to stay out of trouble, and I will tell them go to school and get at least a GED. "So you can be proud of yourself," I'll tell them, "and if you see other people doing bad, you will give them good advice."

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yes, you are pointing yourself in the right direction. For now, you can follow all of the advice you plan to one day be giving to your children. Be a good "father" to yourself, and when you see other people doing bad, at least give yourself the good advice to stay away from trouble and troublemakers. Don't waste your advice on them, unless you they ask or you think they're ready to listen. Let your good example show them the way, if they're ready to see it.

If I Had Three Wishes

If I had three wishes, one wish would be for the people that died in my family, I would wish them all back home to where they belong! I have my grandmother that died, and I got my grandpa that died; my cousin that died, he told me not to trust nobody — and the only person that I trust is my grandma.

My second wish would be to get a lot of money, so that I can help people that need it, like people that can't pay their bills. I would help them with loans, and they would pay me back so that I could help the next person. And my third wish is to have a family: me and my wife will have kids together, and I will have a nice relationship. And that will be my three wishes.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your three wishes are spot on, reflections of a thoughtful and loving heart. Your loan program in particular shows a heart that has outgrown the code of the street — and a good idea, too!

My First Day At Camp

It was my first day at Camp, and I was having fun, playing basketball. It is a couple people I know here. But in like three weeks, I will get to go home. Then I will get to see my people. Then, when I get out, I will stay out. Then I will find a girl to talk to, so I can stay out of trouble. Then I will get me a job, so I can have a little money in my pocket. Then I will go to get some clothes and some shoes, because the ones I got are no good — they are raggedy! So that is all I got, until Saturday, when I get a visit that will make me happy. The end.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We remember your first week at Camp, and you wrote a piece a lot like this one. Since then you've been doing fine, even if sometimes these people get under your skin and mess with your mind — you know how to calm yourself down, and writing about how you're feeling helps. Props on your good program.

My Grandpa's Last Words

Once a upon a time, there was a young man named Demetrus. He always was bad. He stole out of the store, and he was told to stop — but he did not. He had to learn the hard way. He got caught a lot of times, but he did not care. He wasn't learning a thing.

So when his grandpa died, he went crazy! And he would do more bad things even than what he already had been doing! So he went to jail. So he thought that was where he messed up, but he don't really care about that. He is in Camp now for six months, and he don't get to see his grandma during the week to try and take his grandpa's place a little bit for her. And he do care about that.

And that is another reason that he love his grandpa a lot — because his grandpa had told him to stay out of trouble. But look at him now! He know it is going to be okay in Camp, because he know he will change so that he can feel better about losing his grandpa. He loved him a lot, but now his grandpa is in his heart, and he will see him when he meets him in heaven — but 'till then, he will think of him as being here right now, telling him to do right. One thing he loved about his grandpa: He was a OG.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There are different ways to tell someone to stay out of trouble. One way is to tell them to "be safe" and don't get caught, but really the best way to be safe is not to commit the crime or get into the fight or whatever the trouble may be. Since your grandpa was a real OG, he must have known that no matter how slick you get, if you live a life crime, you'll do time. Do right, so you can stay by your grandma's side. Get a legal j-o-b, for Grandma's sake and in memory of your Grandpa OG.

My Favorite School Teacher

My favorite school teacher was Mr. Copper, because he treated us good and helped us do a lot of thing like math and reading. That is what I needed help on two years ago, but it is easy now because I am in here — and I am not getting enough work from the teacher.

But Mr. Copper took us to lunch and let us go on trips. They took us to a basketball game. It was fun to play and watch it, and that was cool of him to do that for the class! That is it for today. That is all he did for us, and we appreciated it.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Some teachers are so inspiring and so generous with their time and resources. They deserve better pay and maybe medals like soldiers get, for service beyond the call of duty. At least Mr. Copper got this "thank you" for all to see.

The Greatest: Cassius Clay

We watched a movie about Muhammad Ali, and he was whooping on people! When he got older and slower, he let a younger George Forman beat on him while he would lean back against the ropes so it didn't hurt him too much. And finally George Forman got tired of swinging and hitting. So then Muhammad Ali aka Cassius Clay, he starts hitting his tired opponent and now he can win. That was his strategy, to wear him out and then to knock him out at the last minute. But he kept fighting after he got too slow and too old for it, so he lost like four times. But he had won all the rest of his fights. So that is it.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Most agree that he was the greatest heavyweight champion there ever was. When he was young, he was so fast on his feet, he'd drop his gloves down in front of him and with no defense but his speed, tell the other guy to try to hit him. He did this in his first heavyweight fight against Sonny Liston, who everyone thought was unbeatable. Liston couldn't even touch him and got so mad and frustrated, he forgot how to fight smart — and Clay (he hadn't changed his name yet) knocked him out to become the new champion! He had so many legendary fights, neither you nor we can tell them all.

Make Heart Beat

I would say bein' caught by surprise, or running a long period of time, are two things that for sure make my heart beat.

I don't get nervous too easily, unless my life is at stake! For example, when I was in court, and they were just predicting my future, that's another time I was real nervous.

-Anthony
From The Beat: The key to your future is to do what it takes to keep yourself out of situations where a judge, court commissioner or PO is deciding your fate. No crime, no time.

What's up Beat?

How's life bean treating you? This that homeboy from Hayward, California writing you from 150 Juvenile Hall again. I been here since April ninth because I ran from Camp Sweeney.

The last time I went to court, they said I can't go back home, so I got to do my time and go home and stay away from fakes and snitches and people that going to get me in trouble.

-Launy
From The Beat: Launy, if you want a better life, you've got to make some changes. How do you plan to do it? Do you think it will be hard? How do you get a whole new set of friends? How bad do you wanna stay out of trouble?

That Lie

I've done told so many lies in my life, not to none of my friends, but to my family to try to cover for my actions. Sometimes I would get away with it and sometimes I wouldn't. I even would try to lie to the police and it would get me caught up, so now I'm-a try not to lie and get by in life

-Valentina
From The Beat: Good idea Valentina. Also think about your behavior, so that there will be no need to lie.

What Bothers Me

When 5-0 come up to the block and they think they know me, talkin' 'about some "Ant what is up?" That bothers me, when people talk about they is going to call 5.0 on me, so I tell 'em like it is. I say ef you and to 5-0 I say, you is bothering me with that.

-Li' Ant
From The Beat: Well, we've been printing you for long enough that we hope you don't take this as disrespectful, but to keep it real: What do you expect? You're committing crimes, you're helping to make your neighborhood more dangerous, and more messed up. OF COURSE people are going to call the cops on you. You're engaging in criminal activity and you know it. Do you expect the cops to just kick back and let you keep doing things that hurt your community?

Popped, Smoked, Drank

This one time I popped a pill and smoked a blunt, then my homie told me to drink a energy drink. So I drank two! Then my heart started to beat and beat; and it beat faster and faster; and I thought I was gonna have a heart attack!

-Juan
From The Beat: We're glad you didn't, but don't go there again!

These Things That Make My Heart Beat Faster

... when I run from the police
...I get in a fight,
.....someone scares me,
...when I get arrested, that's what makes my heart beat faster.

-Jd
From The Beat: Just reading this made our hearts beat faster - almost to the point of a heart attack. Are there any GOOD things that make your heart beat faster? Great music, falling in love, getting ready for a big game?

What Bothers Me

What bothers me, is when somebody is always tryin' to make theirselves feel hard or want somebody to fear them — but those are the people who don't live long in life, because they are too busy tryin' to impress the next man.

-Anthony
From The Beat: Those who are always trying to make someone else fear them, are in fact always testing fate — 'cause someone will turn the tables on them, and, just as you say, it could cost them their lives.

Dread Heads

just because i have dreads my identity is mistaken yeah i'm a blonde-tip dread-head but I'm not jamaican all ninjas and bops can spot me from a mile away i done had every color in my hair even gray i ain't cuttin' my dreads 'cause i'm lettin' 'em grow i wish it was a dye that made 'em glow they hang down in my face so you can't see my eyes especially when around my granddad so he can't tell i'm high

it seems like dreads attract all the cops but most of all it attracts all the bops i say about fifty percent of the hall has dreads most of us twist 'em down before we go to bed just 'cause we got dreads white people think they know where we from if you ain't got dreads then you can't go dumb the police picked me up 'cause i matched the description whoever lied 'bout me keep my name out yo' sentence because this dread-head is not to be mentioned

-DeAngelo
From The Beat: Your granddad just wants what's best for you. Don't you think it's crazy the ones you love are the ones you want to fool? Oh well, people do like to get high, but you could flaunt your dreads without bloodshot eyes. Dreads have a history way longer than thug life, and going dumb doesn't mean you can't still live right. Keep your dreads, but drop the negatives.

Getting a Second Chance

I was at Thunder Road for nine months then I ran. Because I felt like I was not getting my needs met. But I learned a lot of new things about myself that all I need to do is believe in myself. I got a lot closer to my mom. We can talk now without getting into it.

I love my mom for all the things she has done. But I was supposed to go back a week ago but they did not come and get me but they did not. But I'm getting another chance at life to do things right so I love it. Life is good. I'm going to do these weeks and then go home. That's all good.

RIP Lila Mesh

-Mar Mar
From The Beat: Congratulations on getting this second chance. Make the most of it, with your mom's love and support. Like you say, Life is Good. And it can stay good if you keep up your goals!

Police and Judge

G-v-o, Beat! Back once again, from max', is the vato, Giggles. What makes my heart beat faster? Well, to be true with y'all, what makes my corazon beat faster, is when I'm in the 'hood chillin' with the homies, and then the placa (police) rolls up! I get hella paranoid, because I know that these vatos are about to come with some crazy masa, just to mess with us!

Also when I'm in court, waiting for the judge to give me my sentence, I get this weird feeling because I don't know what the hell is about to happen, or how much tiempo this fool is gon' give me. But after I get over it, then it's like it was nothing. So, with all this said, I'm gon' end these liñas with my loyalty and honor to all reading this flecha, with full fashion and style.

-Giggles
From The Beat: Those are situations that would make any sane person nervous, filled with rapid heart-beating anxiety. The problem is that when the moment passes, you feel "it's like it was nothing." Those are moments of truth, which should be taken seriously. You need to structure life choices in such a way as to avoid putting yourself in those heart-racing situations. Your heart is trying to tell you something, but you keep refusing to listen.

Bothers Me

What bothers me is that on May 28, I had a baby aborted that I helped make. It also bothers me that I was locked up when I found out she was pregnant, and there was nothing I could do.

It also bothers me that I'm back in the hall, for the eighth time, and that I'm going to turn eighteen in July and I'm gonna be back in the Hall.

-Jd
From The Beat: Yikes, we're sorry to hear this. The most tragic thing about lockdown is the way life passes you by when you're in the hall. People on the outs make decisions that affect your life and you can't stop them. But tell us the truth: Do you feel like you're ready to be a dad right now?

A Time . . .

A time when my heart was beating out of my body was when the police was looking for me and I was hiding under the car and the k-9 dogs was out there too and I was hella scared.

-Z-Rider
From The Beat: Z-Rider, you should've been hella scared! Stop getting yourself into those situations. Be good. Stop running from the police, we love you, but keep your butt out of the Hall. Don't be scared, be smart. So, did you get caught?

Crime In My Blood

It's in my family blood too.

We all have some gangster, pimps and hustlers. My family live in the game, so that put me in the game, my dad was a hustler and a drug pusher he got killed by being in the game all my cousins and brothers are pimps, gangsters or hustlers, so that's why I feel that it's in my blood.

-Baby Lou
From The Beat: There's always a first in every family. The first to speak English, the first to move out of the country, the first to go to college. You have suffered so much, but you have much more than the recent generations of gangster blood running through your brains. You have the courage and struggle of everyone in your family back to Africa, and you have the most important thing of all: Your free will. It's on YOU to decide who Baby Lou wants to be... honor and love your family, but remember that you don't have to go down like your father did. Instead you can end the cycle by giving your children something better!

The World Goes Faster

Around around it goes.
Time gets weaker and weaker
the world is cold
no one can help you.
Blocks and streets is getting colder
and life of living off youngin's in the family
of love and death and life runs like hell
this living world is so sad
people need to do!
Positive world to a better place to survive
in life nobody is perfect,
everyone makes mistakes and sometimes it
hurts
but people have feelings and I don't have any
feelings.
People don't care about the future or life or
someone else
people are not scared about the' life or
someone
have the world goes around is God.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: You have a lot of emotions that you're trying to get out and we hear your sadness and frustration with the way of things. Try to keep your head up and know that things can always get better.

For a Female

More and foremost
Girl your love can take me
Into love
Your eyes should sparkle the brightest shine
Your lips should be touching mine
Makin' sweetness
The tingle should send our body into weakness
Your star should be like a movie
It's something I want to witness
My flesh should touch your flesh
It should feel like our heart's ready to burst out
our chest
You should only be someone I have
Basically you should be the only one doin' my
math
Your change should give my life sense
More and foremost
Your love should sparkle the brightest

-The Prince

From The Beat: Your use of repetition is great in this piece—the should—because it subtly implies what should be, but is not.

To Love, To Get Together, To Put Together

To love to get together to put together
Our lips should match mixes
Our souls should hold like a statue we always
be forever
I have a belief that something is true even if it
Has not been your wishes
It's been proved
Our love should be attribute
For a short past.... We will have an art of flying
future
No AWOL
We will be together
Without you my life is threatening to die
By then our love will become an explorer
So until I can't no more... my love will always
try to love...to get together
So we can always be ever.

-The Prince

From The Beat: Favorite line: "art of flying future." We can see that you're talking about love and wanting to be together, but a lot of this piece is distorted with challenging word choices and grammar. You have a definite taste for words and how they sound, just try to be a little more focused on your message.

The Reaper's House

Being locked up in the reaper's house is stressful
Everybody in here is evil and most of the staff are sugar-
coated devils

My fellow inmates are snakes in the grass...

-Anon

From The Beat: We know the Hall can feel like hell sometimes, so your descriptions are pretty on target, but no, everyone in juvy is not evil. A lot of the counselors really care about you, and the other detainees are trapped in the same confused struggle that you are...even in lockdown, there are rays of hope. Find them.

Mom

Dear Mother, I want you to know that I'm goin to make
choices in my life by committing to the camp program
and get my GED and do the right thing by staying out of
trouble and by doing that I mean I will stop hanging out
with the people I hang out with. That mean I learned
from my mistake and I will stop making the same
mistake.

-Delmont

From The Beat: Learning from your mistakes is the most important part of the process—you can't grow without first really looking at your experiences and taking what there is to gain wisdom from.

Freedom

What it do Beat? This is Kionte. Man, I've been in here
for some months and this is my last month in here I get
a straight release July sixth, man, I can't wait 'till I get
out. I'm tired of being here in the hall with fake ninjas
when I get out I'm a do it big on the real go back to my
house, car, real food, and doing what I want when I want
wear my own fits and Jordans.

Man I ain't coming back to jail no more, this ain't
the spot at all. Ain't no girls around you at all. Wearing
other peoples stuff nobody should be wanting to come
back to this J-Cat place, but yet we still do. Ninjas need
to step they game up like I did and think of a way to
not come back here and go through with it cause this
ain't what we could keep coming back to ain't nothing
in here benefiting us in the hall so keep it solid and
shake this spot for good and I'm out.

-Kionte

From The Beat: Thanks for the words of wisdom—we hope some of our readers take the good advice you're giving. Good luck on the outs.

Checkin' In

What's cracking Beat? Well, I just had court but they
didn't tell me nada. I got court June 8, 06, so I'ma see
what I'm lookin' at, it's nothing I can't handle. Well
I'ma let y'all go till the next time, Beat. This ya boy
Spooks checkin' out. Alrato!

-Spooks

From The Beat: Good luck at court. What'll you do if you get out? Should we be expecting you back or are you going to do different?

Hustling

Hustling is in my family
everybody in my family sold drugs and dealt with the
hustling life.

-Keith

From The Beat: That doesn't mean that you have to follow in their footsteps. Look at their lives now. Is that where you want your life to go?

These Questions And Answers

It was in my blood to go to school and college and
have a career, degree, because both of my parents
went to school and had set a career and I was
supposed to follow in they footsteps, but I picked
the wrong life. I wanted the fast money, the fame,
to be noticed, I want people to respect me, so I say
no, because if your parents don't mean yo' son
will do wrong. You might want a different life, like
going to school and have a career and degree.

What makes my heart beat faster: Being
in jail for the first time because I couldn't stand
being in this small dark room, and I can't be with
my family, wearing other people's underwear and
eating nasty food, getting visits every other day,
that's what made my head beat, and it made me
want to change my whole life and because being
able to see my family and doing what I want to do,
what I feel like doing wasn't cool.

What bothers me: Fake ninjas supposed to be your
friends and get you to do some stupid shhh with
you and when y'all get caught they snitch on you
and you end up in jail in that small dark room,
thinkin' with no freedom getting treated like an
animal, while them ninjas that are supposed to be
your fiends out laughing ant you and havin' fun,
and maybe talkin' to yo' girl or wifey, maybe yo'
baby mama. That's what bothers me

-First Timer

From The Beat: These are all thoughtful answers to these questions... and in a way they're all about the same thing: How bad it is to be in a situation where the crimes you've committed take you away from what you love and need. It's like fake friends, losing freedom, a messed up lifestyle, they all conspire together to bring you into the kind of life that just feels miserable. Does knowing this give you the determination to change, to do things differently?

An Adult

What's up Beat! It's lil' Marquitos coming from
this unit. Yesterday was my "18 with a bullet"
Birthday. I was only thinking about my job as an
"Adult" now. My responsibilities are gonna be well
taken care of when I'm out. I got two sisters and
a loving mom that need someone to guide them
in the right path. So that's my responsibility as
a man, taking care of his family and supporting
them for the future days to come.

Alrato Raza! Keep your heads up through
rough times in life. Hopefully we all understand
each other's visions in life we want to see.

-Marquitos

From The Beat: We're so glad to hear that you want to do good for your family. We hope you follow through and wish you the best of luck, leaving negativity behind, otherwise... And happy birthday!

What's In My Blood

What it do this Young Sticky from Newark. First
sending my lov... Plus all the fallen homies, RIP
Smokey, Hugo and all the rest.
What's in my blood to stay on top of my game, not
just for me or my familia but my hood.

I go to court tomorrow the seventh, so if you
hear from me that will tell you something, but to
all "stand tall through it all." Stay solid and keep
your head up, only the ones that have it in their
heart stay up in this game we call life. Well on
some good shhh just been kicking it like on the
outs but up in this unit. My love to all, they know
who they are.

-Young Sticky

From The Beat: What do you consider "staying on top of your game" for your familia and hood? How can you be on top of your game if you're involving yourself in activities that will get you thrown back in juvie or worse?

My responsibilities are gonna be well taken care of when I'm out.
I got two sisters and a loving mom that need someone to guide them in the right path.

From A To Z

Everything is in my blood 'cause I know I did everything from A to Z. I ain't did nothing for me to get killed or nothing like that but I'm in and out of jail just like my father and that's not cool cause this is not the life for me.

-Son

From The Beat: We really hope you can gather the strength to make your own way. It's especially hard when a lifestyle has been passed down to us by someone we love and respect, but it is possible.

Bootsie Write Up

Man, shhh, I just got this bootsie write-up, and they 'bout to take some hours from my home visit over some bullshhhh!

But I ain't really sweatin', because there will be another day. You feel me? I say that that now, but when it's time for me to come back — I'll probably feel it then. Yeah, that's only if I do come back!

On the real, this garbage up here is hella bootsie! Ninja's up here thinkin' they know you or think they hard. I'm 'bout ready to hurt one of these little boys. They always playin' little kiddy games and such. But, oh yeah, to all in the Hall, keep y'all heads up and stay solid.

-Baby Boi

From The Beat: It's natural to get heated when you get a write-up for biting on the words of one of these belligerent fools, or whatever. It takes a lot of mental manpower to ignore these fools bumpin' they gums, and just take care of business and do that good program. But come the weekend, you'll be glad you did. So, live and learn but don't run or you'll get burned.

This Girl

This girl I now love. She's not the last girl. I went out it's not Tina her name is Danielle. This girl I love her so much it hurts not being with her. To find this girl and not being with her sometimes I feel like crying. But I have to be a man. This girl I love, when I'm with her I feel good. I don't feel like doing anything wrong or bad. I feel like a man that has a girl that wants to leave you for another man or the way you look she is my life, my soul. So when I get out from here I'm going to treat her the way she's supposed to be treated. This girl I love no one will be able to have.

-Iggy

From The Beat: We're glad you found someone you care so much for. One thing we thought we might mention is that love shouldn't be about ownership—saying things like no one will be able to have her is like saying she belongs to you. If you love her, respect her as an individual, not one of your possessions.

Free Me

What's up ya'll this yo boy Twon. Yo boy Twon gone hold it down? Man I can't wait til they let me back in the streets where I belong. But it's cool I'll be back out there, watch. For all these individuals thinking they hard I'm a show 'em something. That they not no threat that's a promise.

-Lil' Twon

From The Beat: Be careful out there when you get out.

An Ugly Reality

When I was eleven I seen my uncle get shot in his head. It was not a good sight, I had blood all over me. I still see my uncle when I'm asleep.

-Nephew

From The Beat: Tragic. We wish you could have told us a bit more about your life and how you are moving ahead with such a painful image.

Juggalo

I'm a juggalo, my mom or dad is not a juggalo or pimp or gangsta or hustla.

I'm not a pimp I'm not a hustla, I'm a person that will make it in life like my dad.

My dad made it my dad's dad made it "but my mom did not" she's a dope fiend. I refuse to be a dope head, I'm John E.Z. I will make it, I messed up but I will do right and go down the right road not the left road!

"When I'm in danger or love

When I see my mom do good,

When I see my girlfriend..."

-Juggalo

From The Beat: We're glad you want to do right, but tell us, how will you do it? What kind of new things will you do so that you don't end up in the same place, saying the same thing? Tell us your plans...

What Make My Heart Beat Faster?

What make my heart beat faster, just living the life will make it beat faster because living the life is hard and fun at the same time. You never know what is going to happen at any giving time so you must stay on your toes. Because if you get caught slippin' you might not make it to see another day. It's like a rush that you cannot control, it feels so good that you do not know what to do you want to do everything at once but you can't do nothing. Just posting on the block is a different rush.

-Diego

From The Beat: Yeah, that does sound like it would make a heart beat faster. It sounds like a roller coaster, only with no seat-belt. We hope you stay safe out there.

Locked Up

The thing that bothers me is when I get locked up and you can't see your family and friends and if you get locked up with others and they snitch on you and they get out and you're still locked up. That happened to me but the people that I came in with are still here for the same thing as me.

-Unknown

From The Beat: Being kept away from the people you love can't be easy. They must miss you too, so when you get out try to stay out...

What I Want When I Want It

What bothers me is when I am in a place where I can't do what I want when I want to do it: places like Camp, group homes, Juvenile — because whatever I do there, I will be held accountable for my actions.

And that's okay, but I don't like people telling me what to do, and I don't like people screaming at me! I don't even like trying to do some kind of a good program, so I can get out — and that's what bothers me, besides the police.

-No Name

From The Beat: Nobody but nobody gets to do what they want when they want it all the time, or even much of the time. And even when they do, it depends on what it is they really want to do — 'cause some things just are not cool, ever, no matter what. When you accept that, maybe you'll be able to keep yourself out of places where people tell you what to do and yell at you, too.

Heart Beats Faster In a Gang

What makes my heart beat faster, is being in a gang, because you never know what's around the corner for you. It makes me feel like I am still living, because I feel my heart beating!

And when I am on one, I am hella paranoid, and I always feel like someone is going to try and kill me! That makes my heart beat faster. And when I run into some stuff, my heart stops and skips a beat and starts beating again.

-No Name

From The Beat: When you live on the edge, facing death and the fear of death daily, it does magnify your awareness of still being alive. But, man, what a price you're paying already. And one day, you may actually pay with your life. It ain't worth it.

Twin Brother

What it do Beat? For me just doing my time up in here, But I'm going to write about something off the topic because I'm not really feeling the ones on the paper, so I'm going to write about my twin brother. He just wrote me telling me how he out there getting all the girls and how he out there getting money and he told me about the new Jordan's and the thought of it make me stress. Because that could be me there with him you feel me, He was telling me about this one lady that he's dating and she out there giving him everything he want and he told me about her sister and that she trying to get with me so that's one thing that I'm going to be doing when I get out and it's not like we broke or nothing like that but if they going to give I'm going to take that's it I'm out.

-StoneFace

From The Beat: It's dangerous taking advantage of people just for material things—usually it's not worth it and there are invisible strings attached. Think about it.

This YoYo

Hey, what's up Beat? This is YoYo, you know. I wanna say, keep it cool. This week, I'm going to write about what makes your heart beat. My heart beats faster when I pop pills.

It beats hella fast and I can't stop it, 'cause the drugs make it beat faster — but I feel hella good, like I can do anything! I mean, I don't just do anything 'cause I know what happens when you're off something — it makes you stupider! So I don't do anything that will get me caught up when I'm thizzing.

Another thing that makes my heart beat faster, is when I'm running from five-oh, 'cause I don't know if I'm going to get caught. Or sometimes I feel my heart beat faster if I'm driving my car and I'm driving home drunk and a cop car is going the same direction, because I think he might pull me over — and I don't have no driver's license!

This is what makes my heart beat faster. Till next week, be cool. Don't get in trouble. This is your homie, YoYo.

-YoYo

From The Beat: We're glad you don't do anything stupid after you've popped a pill, 'cause yeah it makes you stupid — even that very feeling that you can do anything, is a stupid way to feel 'cause you can't! It clearly has affected your judgment already. Knowing that is a good thing. But really, with all the trouble you're getting into anyway, why pop or drive drunk? Seems like you're already doing kinda stupid things, wouldn't you say? How smart is driving without a license is you want to stay free?

My Heart Beat

What makes your heart beat faster? Pills that's what, and weed and drank!

This Lil' Pug and I been shot at, but my heart wasn't beating until I heard something go by my ear. I was like what the hell!? My ninjas start bustin' back. They came outside, my potna had a gun them boys got up out of there.

-Lil' Pezie Reverend

From The Beat: Pezie, that kind of lifestyle is bad for your heart, don't you think? What makes you feel calm and safe?

Heart Beat

What makes my heart beat faster is when I'm scared. Like when I came here I was scared I felt like a lion chasing it's dinner.

-Dannette

From The Beat: Why were you so scared? What was scary about this place? What were you worried about?

'Bout To Be Out

'Sup Beat? This your boy, Mien G Money, hollering at y'all from Camp. You know? 'Bout to be out this thang in a min! Got that, you know, one month left, up in this thang. You know, probably when this piece come out I'll be gone.

-Mien G-Money

From The Beat: If you read these words. We've been warning you that you're slipping back into your old mind set, and it will bring you back if you let it. Get your mind off the street and stay free.

Undercover Police

One time my heart was beatin' because I ran from the police, I served a undercover police some cocaine and the 5-0 came and I ran.

They started chasing me and I got caught. But then they knew I did it because I had the marked money in my pocket so they knew I did it.

--Young Money

From The Beat: Young Money, that's all bad money. You may be sitting in the Hall regretting getting caught, but the real problem is that you are selling drugs. No one gets caught once. You need to find a better way to make your money. Whether you believe that selling drugs is necessary or morally wrong - the reality is, you're gambling with your freedom.

The Bother

What bothers me is when someone talks to me that I don't want to be talking to or if someone was talking about me.

It bothers me when I can't get something done that's supposed to be done and what else bothers me is when I have to do something I don't want to.

-Zuko

From The Beat: A sense of control over your own decisions and your destiny is something we ALL need. Thanks for putting it so well!

Dangerous Beat Topics Off The Top

What runs through my blood is drugs and violence; on both sides of my family members sold drugs and are in jail. (There was good in my family but I didn't care at the time.)

When my heart start beating fast it feels like it will jump out of my body. When I am in front of the judge and I don't know what he is going to do with me. It's real nerve racking. When something bad is about to happen, or I did something that I know I wasn't suppose to do.

What bothers me is being in (Juvi). In here you do too much thinking about everything. What bothers me is when I do something bad and I know that I don't have no business doing it, but still do it. What used to bother me is when I do something without thinking. But when I came to Juvi, it changed my life. Jail is not where I want to be. It broke my stubbornness out of me. And I am willing to make a huge change in life.

It's not worth it

-Being in and out of jail

-Smoking weed

-Acting bad

-Doing stupid stuff and I know better

It's time for a change now!

-No name

From The Beat: You've obviously done a lot of learning during your time. We hope you hold on to that knowledge and the desire to do different.

What Has Been Bothering Me (RIP Cell)

What it really be Beat? My brother's death has been bothering me. Marcellus, may God rest your soul. We need you to help us stay strong 'till I meet you at the crossroads love you bra.

-Lil' Naudie Bo

From The Beat: Keep on telling us how much you miss your brother, because we feel your pain and we want to walk with you.

I Want To Do Good

I got an interview to go to...

I don't know what to do.

I hope I get out so I can get right and get a job

so I can do good

I got to do good,

so if I get out I can go to school and get a job

I need to get it right.

-Lil' Brian

From The Beat: Wanting to do good is the first step - the second is following through. Good luck Brian, get your life right.

What Makes Your Heart Beat Fast?

It is not a lot of things that make my heart beat fast but a couple of things that does is when I get caught doing something I'm not suppose to be doing, another thing is when I first hear that somebody in my family just died, and another is when I hear a gunshot that sounds close or if somebody is shooting at me.

-T-Bo

From The Beat: Those are all things that affect the heart. How many people in your family have died? Is it a lot? How many times have you been shot at? How often do you hear shots in your neighborhood? Sounds like your heart is beating fast too much of the time!

What Bothers Me

It bothers me that someone is hating on me. I had saw this one girl and I had told one of my friends...

I told him that I was going to ask her out.

Then he tried to get at her

So then he got wit her

And it's ok

I will never let her come between our friendship.

-Tubb Tubby

From The Beat: That's very noble of you Tubby, do you think that your friend treated you in a disrespectful way or was this just an example of friendly competition?

I Grew Up Around It

It run in my blood.

I grew up around gangsta shhh,

I'ma do gangsta shhh.

I let all my peeps do that.

I was raised to that.

I'ma do that.

I was raised in the streets, and you gon' respect me, and that's the way it did.

-Lil' Suave

From The Beat: Is everyone in your family in the game? Is there anyone you know who has a different kind of life in your family? Who is it? Who are the people in your family that you most look up to?

Is It In Your Blood?

Man I don't know what's in my blood. I want to be like my mom but then I want to be like my dad I don't know.

I would to be like myself and do my thing, I don't do what I see people do. The end.

-Lil' Brian

From The Beat: Who are you? What do you mean be like yourself? You talk about doing good, so what is "doing good" mean to you?

Is It In Your Blood?

I think it is kinda in my blood to be a hustla because a lot of people in my family do it, and because I like money a lot and like to have a lot of it, but when I hustle I don't only think about selling drugs and stuff, I think about doing stuff that is legal too.

T-Bo

From The Beat: Hustler is street for businessman. You can apply your hustling gene in any business environment. The legit world is full of people who go after what they want, but they do it without risking going to jail. So think about how you can find business thrills off the streets.

What Bothers Me?

What bothers me is when I'm told to do a lot of things that I don't want to do. When I am sick and I can't go outside, when I can't do something, and when I lose at something.

-T-Bo

From The Beat: Great examples! What was the last thing you lost at? Was it a game, or a real life event?

My First Song

The first song I ever remember hearing was Tupac, the song was "Troublesome. "I don't know how old I was but I remember it clearly. After I heard it once....

-Anon

From The Beat: More! More! More! We want to know more about this song and what it was about it that moved you!

Definitely

Gang banging runs in my family not my parent's but in my family. Around the late 1980's early 1990's my uncles were crazy! They got down and dirty and did it real big! They was some hardcore G's. In my generation most of my cousins all bang. We all from different sides of Hayward but show no disrespect.

-Juicy!

From The Beat: And you are planning to stay living this life as a gang banger? Always having to watch your back? Watch for your police? In and out of jail? Pretty pathetic. There's so much more for you to live for Juicy!

I'm Out Soon!

G-vo, Beat readers. Let me introduce myself. This is Lil' Crazy from Hayward. First allow me to extend my utmost love and respect to all. How you been doin'? Me coo, just chillin', maintainin' a steady program up here in this so-called max' - ain't nothing max' about this place! Feel me?

Well, anyway, I'm getting out August twenty-fourth. I'm goin' to the "coñtone" and go' chill with my ruca and post up with the homeboys and get the petho. I'm a get me some female attention as soon as I get out; my lady's gonna be waitin for me! Yeah, so I'm out in two months, released, even though it's probation. My co-part's in Rita got bailed out like some suckas! Can't do no tiempo: they some weenies! They out there getting drunk, but it's coo' - I'm out soon! But I'm a cut this wila (letter) short. So, until pencil meets paper. Alrato.

-Crazy

From The Beat: Max' takes on a whole other meaning when you're not about to get out, when you spend sometimes over a year just waiting to go to the next level, whether it's CYA or the state pen'. And you weren't sounding this superficial when you didn't know the outcome of your case either! All the hard, max-thinking you did, now, it's like it never happened. It may feel like a good thing to you today, but the consequences of failing to learn from your mistakes can be overwhelming. We say this with real concern for your future well-being.

All I Hear Is Gunshots

All I see is crimes
All I see is homies dying
And homies doing time
To me, it's time to get right
All I think about is if I can
Make it through the night
I was locked up for my birthday
Ain't that about a...
I mean I just did what I had to do to a
snitch!
I'm locked up missin' out on everything
In a way it's good 'cause I would've been
out there pushing canes
-Baby Chino
From The Beat: It's hard to "do right" when you're in a cycle with haters and snitches. Well, think what it would take for you to look the other way next time someone tries to embed you in their negative cycle. Say, my life is too good for this b-s and walk away a free man. The time is now to start pushing the school books!

Gotta Eat

Man what's up Beat. We got to eat. If we don't eat what's the point of living I don't know why ninjas be playing with the game but we got to eat Beat. Eat, don't play with the game, Beat, just eat.
-Timothy
From The Beat: We won't argue with you on that, but we wonder if the reason folks are hustlin' is really for food, or for extra pairs of shoes and that ridiculous street pride?

That Lie

why you lie
on me
it is ugly
'cause it make
things harder
"just because"
when i get out
i'll look above
day come, night fall
i will stand tall
forget y'all love' ones
mouth lies
like bust' a gun

-T
From The Beat: Words have power to lie, but at least you didn't die by a gun. You took a fall but just stand tall, maintain and walk away from what causes pain.

It's A Hustle

Hustling runs in my blood because I can't keep asking my mom or my family or anyone to give me stuff, so sometimes I'll go out and make some money. Every way I make money it's a hustle, but I'll sometimes have a job to do but not really, or when I already have a couple dollars I'll hang out or play a lot of sports, but my life isn't about making money it's really about doing the right thing and making the right choice and (responsibility).
What makes my heart beat fast is when I play sports and take a rest, my heart beats fast.
-Dorsey
From The Beat: We hope you keep doing things that increase your options, rather than decrease them. Hustling works in the moment because you get cash. But long-term it's just gonna increase the number of nights you spend in jail. So, keep your options open! Stay free.

Loyal

man ninjas is so fake
when you lookin' they eyes
all you see is envy and hate
talking behind your back
but smiling in your face
running they mouths about my case
but they friends with the d-a
i'm trying to live my life
i'm tired of having to be strapped day and
night
but how do you do something right
when everybody trying to earn stripes
murderers rapists thugs all in my sight
everyday i try not to fight
these ninjas ain't loyal
they couldn't spend a day on my soil
last of a dying breed
thoroughbred since my dad planted his seed
i had to do my thang to get what i need
i'm real i'm gon' stay in the lead
-Wayne
From The Beat: With all your intelligence and ability, you need to raise your game from the street's futility, to a higher level, beyond the reach the devil's crew — all those murderers, rapists and thugs trying to earn their stripes off you. Stripes! They think it's like a sergeant major in a war, but it's like a slave's back that's been whipped till it's nothing but hanging flesh and bleeding sores — only now they're enslaved to the game, and the slave master's the devil himself, promising fame and bringing pain. How can you change? Man, you better know it's impossible to maintain without elevating your game to that higher level.

That Lie

Man people in juvenile hall always lyin'. They're always talking about "I got this, I got that." Man these ninjas just be lyin'. They ain't got no scraper, they ain't got no money, no guns. They don't be were they say. They're fake, man. This Beat is for every fake ninja in juvenile hall, man step yo game up.

-Dirty Nell
From The Beat: It's hard to compete these days with all the scandalous and fabulous. Wouldn't it be great if we all just got real and talked about how we really feel, but in truth that will never happen, so don't worry about what others say, block it out if you can.

Haters

What make my heart beat faster being around people that don't like me because I never know what they will do to me. Because one day I was leaving my place and I see this ninja that went to the same school as me and he didn't like me and he came up behind me and tried to hit me from behind but he missed and my cousin Nico came and helped me and ever since that every time I see somebody I don't like, my heart starts beating fast like NASCAR.

-Lil' Tuttle
From The Beat: Being snuck up on from behind can put fear into a anyone's heart! We hope it never happens to you again.

Don't Smile At Me

Man people always tryin' to smile in my face but turn around and want to talk shhh about me. They smile in my face because they want something but I don't pay them no attention. I do me and they do them. Simple.
-Dirty Nell
From The Beat: People lie when they're scared. Maybe they're scared of you, or maybe they're scared of themselves. We all do it. Like you said, the best thing to do is just look away and do your own thing.

What Make My Heart Beat Faster

When them boys pull out them guns and start shooting
that make my heart beat fast.
When dogs start trying to bite me
that make my heart beat fast.
When the police stop me and I'm with somebody who runs
I'm going to run too and that make my heart beat fast.
If I didn't do anything
my heart still beat fast because I'm with somebody who did
something.
But I ain't trippin'
-Rg
From The Beat: We hope you do stay out! It's not as easy as it looks, so be sure to prepare yourself with a plan A and a plan B for staying free.

Real Talk: Wayne and Quincy Out Max'

Q: What's happenin'?
W: Nothin', bra, just thinking.
Q: What you thinking about, bra?
W: I'm tired of these ninjas gossiping. What you think, bra?
Q: You got to understand these ninjas ain't solid and ain't looking at no time, not like you and me.
W: They going to group homes and stuff, so they bragging about what they did — but not saying they told on that kid!
Q: You ain't never lied, but we got to worry about this time they trying to give us!
W: All I see is envy and hate, when I look in these fake, smiling faces.
Q: Don't trip, bra! Ninjas gon' see when we get out what we really about.
W: But we need to change our whole demeanor, big bra, on the real.
Q: I know, we got these lil' fakes trying to take our style.
W: Bragging about the murder rate, but ain't even lived our life yet, bra.
Q: Speaking of the murder rate and these fake ninjas, these be the ones that get put on there.
W: They got a second chance and they playing with it. Boy, I hate these lucky ninjas.
Q: But you already know, real recognize real.
W: Oh, you already know! Let's handle our problems and let these murkats trap they' selves with they' own mouths.
-Wayne and Quincy

From The Beat: It is hard to sit in max' and see these other folks get a second chance at being free and throw it away, as they brag about going back to living the same old way. They keep repeating the same mistakes, and they keep getting the same results — and it feels like a personal insult to those who pray for one more chance to live their lives right on the other side of this barbed-wire fence. The best you can do, is start living and thinking right today, and whenever freedom comes your way, you'll be ready to stay that way. You won't have to fake, 'cause you'll already know how to make it.

Going Dumb Stupid And Hyphy

...Is a bad thing to do because it can ruin your life. I've seen a lot of people get killed or shot, but, The Beat, the thing about goin' dumb is when you are at a party and all you could think about is going dumb, stupid, hyphy.
-Antonio
From The Beat: If going dumb can ruin your life, why do people do it? What feels good about it?

Outta Oakland

What's up Beat? This is Lil' Tonyo from the 150 crew. Man, I gotta go to a group home in LA for six months that ain't nothing. Then I gotta go to Reno, Nevada, to live with my mother. I ain't trying to go because it's better off in a different city than state. Plus it's this girl I'm trying to hook up with and I'm real cool with her brother. So that makes a plus. My family is out here and I don't want to take keep taking planes back and forth. But I feel what my mom is saying. She is trying to start new life.
Well anyways I'm getting out in a few days so I'll probably go. So you won't hear from me again unless I fail the group home, all right peace.
-Lil' Tonyo
From The Beat: We hope you don't fail the group home! Always know that you can write to The Beat from wherever you are.

You

nobody can ever tell
how we be
'cause people always hide they' real selves
behind they' personalities
somebody could smile
and then change the next day
one time be true
then turn around act hard and be fake
when they' not
it don't matter if they' square or they hustle
just by lookin'
you never know
how they is on the under
so change your ways now
and never judge a book by its cover

-Buddamilk

From The Beat: Everybody knows to check the fake in the next, but when they fake it themselves, it's like, oh well. And sometimes that's how it has to be, 'cause not everybody should know all the details of your private reality; but when we start to believe in the masks we wear — that's when we're really headed nowhere fast and we get stuck with that pose as a daily task.

Lazy, Crazy Days of Summer

Well, the days are going fast, and everyday my squad is getting crazier and getting locked up like animals. We already be trying to live everyday, day by day, one step at a time, but the system is eating us up!

They say we are not normal. The system says we can't be on the streets because we are harmful to people, always smashing on people for no apparent reason. Well, that's how we are — and that's how the system want us to be! They say we is to suppose to rehabilitate, but the system does not teach us anything. It just shows us how to get away next time by showing us what mistakes we made.

They show us how they can lock us up and take away our freedom and call us by our last name and tell us what they are going to do with us next. But what they don't say is, "You're life is over. There's no way out of the system, because once you're in, you're in." So enjoy those lazy, crazy days of summer, for life.

-Lil' Sunny D

From The Beat: No, it's not true that you can't get out of the system, or at least it's not true to say that no one can. Whether you can, or will, or not, is up to you. You say the system wants you to live this savage life, so they can keep locking you up. Eventually, maybe you'll be working for below minimum wage somewhere, jumping at the chance to get out of your cage. So don't go along with the script! If you believe that's what the system wants, why give them what they want? You honestly advise your homies to walk straight into that fate in exchange for a summer of "fun" (quotes around it, because you know it's not always so much fun, it gets downright scary, lethal). Yes, we agree that the system should do more to help you rehabilitate, but it's on you. It's your life. Don't give it to the system like this!

Going Dumb, Stupid, And Hyphy

Going stupid or dumb means to me that when I'm with my patnas on the outs in the hood, especially when I'm with my brothers Lil'Meech and Lil' D. They be doing stuff that ain't even in the dumb movement. I'm Lil' Pug and I'm not even gonna lie.

The dumb movement is about youngsters who are young teens to early twenties. They start to shake their dreads because E-40 and Federations and Keek the Sneak said go stupid, go dumb.

-Lil' Pug

From The Beat: You've told us what it is, but next tell us why it is, how it feels, and what comes out of it?

How Do You Determine A Real Smile From One That Is Fake?

I can tell someone by a real smile and a fake smile because if you tell a joke and he just smile instead of laughing that is a fake smile.

-Lil'D

From The Beat: Good observation! We all know how it feels to laugh at a funny joke.

I Am Going To The NBA In The Future So I Can Make Money

I am going to the NBA in the future, and I will dunk all the time! When I get the ball, I will pass the ball too, unless I can draw the foul 'cause then I will make one of my free throws. And I will get the ball back after the second one, and I will pass to somebody that is open for a three-point shot — so, along with my free throw, it can be a four-point possession. That's how we can take the lead in fourth quarter with six seconds on the clock ... five ... four ... three ... two ... one ... the end.

-Demetrus

From The Beat: It's a fine fantasy, but not everyone can be an NBA star. So take that same sense of team play and competitiveness into the business world, and make lots of money by helping the next guy do his job better by doing your job better. You may not see yourself on TV that way, but you can buy a big screen TV to watch at home at the end of your work day.

That Lie

A lie that has affected me is when my mom told me that we was going to Connecticut to see the rest of my family but she lied and I felt a little bad.

-Lil' D

From The Beat: It's terrible when parents aren't straight with their kids, because it creates distrust, and teaches kids to lie too! When will parents learn?

E-40 and Federations and Keek the Sneak said go stupid, go dumb.

Go Warriors

I play the game
that fans like.
I throw you the ball,
you drop it,
you strike out.
I give you the defense,
you give me the glory.
We run,
we hop,
we fight the right.
This sport is the great sport of
Oakland:
Warriors.
You feel me, play on my ninjas!

-Kip Boy

From The Beat: Now, this, we can back, unless we are missing something. Go Warriors!

Respect

what bothers me
is when people try
and disrespect you
or where you're from

-Juan

From The Beat: Words of fools can bother you, but just shake it off and be coo'.

Going Stupid And Dumb In The Hyphy Movement

Going dumb, stupid and hyphy means when somebody is happy or when they're high and they just want to have fun or just express their feelings. My ninjas and my brother and my cousins just be mad.

-Young Freaky

From The Beat: Describe for us one time when you went dumb with your friends, tell us the whole story, use all your words to paint the picture and take us there with you.

Jail Makes My Heart Beats Faster

What makes my heart beat faster is when I go back to jail, because every time I do a crime I just don't think because I am on drugs.

After the drugs come down I start realizing that I've done something stupid and end up in jail, but now my heart beats faster because I am in jail and I have a son with a mother that don't know how to do things and what to do 'cause all she wants to do is drink and stay at the house with me. But when I get out I am going to change all that.

-Bajrami

From The Beat: We wish you luck with those changes. You have a lot of responsibility being a father and all. If you stay sober and strong, maybe you can help your girlfriend be a good Mom—if you are supportive for each other you have a much better chance of making a strong family for your baby. You also have to have the pride to ask for help from those you trust, and maybe it's even someone in the system

My Family Makes Me Happy

What makes me happy is my family.

They keep me motivated.
They keep me out of trouble.
And my brothers and sisters,
all of them make me happy.
My grandma makes me happy
because she is the one that raised me,
and my grandpa — he died in his sleep,
but he is in God's hands now.
So I don't have to weep.

And my nieces and nephews,
I love them a lot, and
I want to see them grow up
to be nice young ladies and men.
And every time that I see them I be happy.
I get happy when I get to see my dad and mom.
They make me happy too.
My best friend makes me happy too.
I love her for that.

All these people try to keep me out of trouble,
and I am trying to keep myself out of trouble.
I am going to do good.

-Demetrus

From The Beat: Here's another topic you can write about: How do you get yourself into trouble? How has it happened in the past? What will you need to change to avoid repeating the same mistakes again in the future? When you get into trouble, it makes you unhappy and all these people who care about you, too.

Up At Camp Doing My Thing

Up at Camp, doing my thing. Been up here for like five weeks, and it's that time for me to go on some more home passes.

If you comin' up to this place, then do yo' program and don't run, because all you gon' do is get caught and go down. So come, do yo' little six-to-nine months, and get it done! 'Cause if you're a real man, you do yo' time, and on the weekend, you get paid — but only you know how the real money come. Lastly, stay up, all!

-Lil' Lorn

From The Beat: We appreciate that good advice on doing your program at Camp, getting those HV's and then a release with no warrant on your head. But now, if you're out slanging D every weekend, you're only kidding yourself about staying free — 'cause sooner or later you'll get caught up for something or other and go back to the Hall ... and next time, maybe no Camp option.

Bay Area's Hyphy Movement

Born to mac
Attitude
Young

Aggressive
Retarded and we ride the yellow bus
Everybody goes stupid
Alameda County Juvenile Hall
Shooting one on sight

High speed chases and running red lights
Yadda mean
Pills
Hyphy all...
Year around

Money on our mind
Out of control
Violent
Everybody stay intoxicated
Marijuana
Ecstasy
Never give up
Take off instantly.

-Nooney & Rush

From The Beat: Is the Hyphy Movement all about drugs and being tragically stupid? Is this a movement that we can be proud of? Do you think that Bay Area Hyphy Movement will go down in history as something positive? It may be all those things to you, but why? — and is that all it is?

Going Dumb, Stupid, Hyphy

Going dumb to me is shaking my dreads and goin' stupid, dancing, goin' skits. Doin' whatever comes to mind. Just act ignorant, do whatever you want to, go stupid.

-Dirty Nell

From The Beat: Nice description!

My Cousin's In My Blood

My cousin Cridy Bo is in my blood.
So brother that makes me all the above.
I'm a gangster, pimp, hustler, and a drug dealer.
I really can't trust ninjas, so I say forget ninjas.
That's what runs in my veins.
Everybody in my family was raised in the dope game.
Chop up so much dope my hands get coke stains.
Cridy Bo was a hustler, a hitter, a real stunna.
Sip so much bo he was always in slumber.
Crid represented my hood so I rep it too.
The only thing I'm saying is RIP Cridy Bo.

-Kid

From The Beat: If we were to call up Cridy Bo's ghost and ask him what he wants for you, Kid, would he warn you against the game? Would he try to protect you from dying young like he did? Would he tell you to wash yourself of those coke stains? We think he would. All this reppin' is just getting young men killed. Please, stop yourself and the town's bleeding. For Cridy Bo.

What Make My Heart Beat

this is why my heart beat fast
people rushing you
don't know who go' hit you
shoot you even stab you
i stay on my toes but
my heart still beat fast
and you don't know you' being watch
or when you go' get down
that what makes my heart beat
i'm never scared just worried
thinking somebody out to get me
cat be looking funny
just with they mug
trying to look hard
but they know me when i'm riding
don't get it wrong
i'm young but i get down
that what make my heart beat

-Young Guez

From The Beat: You don't need to get down with the people you see, but you do need to get yourself off the street. We can feel that nervousness that will get the best of you, and have you doing things you don't need to do. Quit, go legit, and be coo'.

My Dad

This is who I am because of my dad. It is in my blood line father used to be a big drug lord in Stockton California. He used to have shoe boxes of money. I mean that ninja used to have thousands of dollars every month. He used to sell kilos of cocaine. He was also a big gang member. A lot of people had looked up to him. He was a crip. He used to get chased by the police everyday and had warrants every week and used to rob everybody. They called my dad Taco.

-Taco's Son

From The Beat: So do you feel like you have a choice in your life, or is your father's path always going to be the one you follow?

Going Stupid Dumb And Hyphy

To me it is shaking your dreads and moving your body to the beat. Yes going dumb has got me in trouble. One time I was going stupid dumb and hypee to Keak the Sneak and I knocked over my mom's laptop and she was not laughing.

Like another time I was really feeling it, I was going dumb to E-40 and my grandma was telling me to turn that music down. I couldn't really hear her so I kept on going dumb and she came to the room and opened the door and my going dumb hit the door and it hit my grandma and she didn't even smile.

-Lil' D

From The Beat: Great story. I bet your Grandma wasn't fake not-smiling, but real not-smiling!

Gratitude

I am grateful for being here today, not dead.
I am grateful to wake up another day.
I am grateful to have a grandma that love me and a mom that want me to do better and stay out of trouble.
They want me to change when I get out.
I am trying to do that but I need a little help.
I am grateful to have someone to care for me.
I am grateful to be a dad one of these days and I am grateful to write for the beat.

-Demetrus

From The Beat: Everyone can use help, especially in the difficult task of changing your life, which means your daily life decisions. Yet you cannot make that into an excuse: "I didn't change because no one helped me." Make up your mind that you will change, no matter what! Also seek out help; don't wait for help to come to you.

Nothing Fake About Family

Everybody lies every now and then but when I get lied to I don't really trip about it. But really, what the lie is about can get you upset. I can determine a real smile or a fake smile from the people I really know like my sister or brother, cousin because I know how they act. My family really don't give me fake smile.

-Lil Robert

From The Beat: Good for you, because lies really hurt the liar more than they hurt you — because one lie leads to another lie, and soon they're spiraling downward.

The Beat

Hey Beat! What's up with it? It's yo' Brainiac from Camp, just hollering. I'm up here, almost 'bout to get released next month, finally! Well, I want ya to know that I'm looking forward to getting out and working for The Beat, 'cause I'm gonna need the job. Oh yeah, and I was wondering if ya can print a whole art book. so I can see all of the art! Oh yeah, and I want to send one love to Gorilla, who was here for a year writing to The Beat every week. Stay up!

-Brainiac

From The Beat: You know how to do a good program at Camp, as you're proving by this, your second time through. So it's wise to turn your focus onto what you need to do to do well (do right) after your release, too. For sure, we welcome you to come to our office, and we'll give you some work to do.

Waiting

What's good, Beat? How is life treating y'all? Well, I hope and pray that it has been treating y'all good. For me, today is another day here in Camp, and like every other day, I'm just waiting for Saturday to get here. I get my over-nighter this Saturday coming up, and I can't wait!

The last time I got my over-nighter, I got dumbass drunk with the homeboys. And then I went back home to answer my curfew call, and I couldn't even remember that I did it. I don't know what I said! I was on one! But when I came back to Camp on Sunday at 8:00 PM, they said I did made my curfew call. So I ain't mad.

But not just lettin' you know some info' of my own, 'cause I know how it feels bein' locked up and not having nothing to do but to read books and The Beat Within. So I hope I took some tiempo off your time. Other than that, I send out love to all doing their tiempo. Stay strong. They can't keep us locked up forever. Keep your head up. I'm out.

-Lil' Chuckie

From The Beat: So here's the question that maybe you'll answer in another piece: Did you learn a lesson from all the stressing you went through over being so drunk you couldn't even remember if you made your curfew call? Or will you go right back out there and get falling-down drunk again, to the point where you can't remember what you did or said? What's so attractive about sloppy, black-out drunk? Come on, you're a bright guy — don't risk your freedom for a bottle of oblivion. What if something serious went down, and you don't even know what you happened? Actually, missing your curfew call is serious enough, que no?

My Style

It is in my style to make people hate me, but you should never judge a book by its cover. So I say it is my style to say what you want to say about my style, because I buy my clothes.

-Lil' Ant

From The Beat: We know you have a real live book inside you, worth reading and worth more than just a cover. So what say you write it, and we'll print it in The Beat!

If I Die Tonight

If I die tonight...
Tell my momma I love her and I'm sorry for all the things I put her through!
If I die tonight...
Tell the rest of my fams that I love 'em too and not to forget about me.
If I die tonight...
Tell the homies I'm gone and I lived life to the fullest but not to avenge my
If I die tonight...
Remember a young solider from the block holding it down you feel me
though?
If I die tonight...

-Lil' Gumby

From The Beat: We hope you can tell everyone that you stood for yourself, because though we never know what's going to happen, we hope you'll be around for some time to come and there is more to your life than the block, the homies and being a solider on the streets when in truth you are gambling with your life and your freedom.

Everything Is Pretty When You Don't Look Down

This world is crazy
Or maybe it's all in my head
People all roaming around like the living dead
'cause through each nice act
is just a sin or a lie
so should I be like them
and act oh so blind and fall in line
with a beautiful crust
but inside so eroded and stiff
doing all I can
to cover up all the true ways of life
well...let's just see
when the rules don't abide
well...let's just see what happens
when reality and your fantasy collide

-Yogi

From The Beat: There's no doubt that the world is crazy—it's not just you—but in all of that craziness there are pockets of real, true beauty. That in itself is crazy—that among all of the ugly things that happen there can still exist something good. It's harder to see when you always look down (and really hard to see from somewhere like juvie), and we don't propose that you never look down, but that we should all seek to balance the good and the bad that we focus on. Otherwise we lose the spark.

Back Again

To all locked up in the halls, county, and the pen. Well hopefully all you going through all these without stressing. Well today is Tuesday and I just got released last week, but I violated my probation.

Well I might be going to a group home sooner or later, am going to court on the 22rd of June.

-Lil' Flaco

From The Beat: We hope wherever you end up, a group home or staying in the hall, you get it together so that we don't keep hearing the "back again" stories. Let us know what other plans or dreams you have for yourself.

What It Do-Do

What it do this Young Sticky from Newark. To all stay solid. Now to a smile from one that is fake you can always tell a fake by the way they walk, talk; real homies can tell. Basically real recognize real and fake recognize fake, that's why the homies know what I'm talking 'bout and the fake just don't get it.

Keep writing, let me know what's going on. As for me I turn 18 in August I'll be getting out soon, moms say she talk to the PO so I hope I'm all out the door. RIP Smokey.

-Young Sticky

From The Beat: We're glad you're getting out but want to know what you'll do when you get there. Are you going to be joining us again soon or have you learned something different this time? We suspect you'll be back given the tone of your piece.

Back In

What's up Beat its Ally-bo one more time but its for sure my last time in juvie because I'm turning eighteen in July, so I'm just waiting to get out. I've learned a lot since I've been in here and I put my heart to God and He has done a lot for me, so all you in need for guidance is follow the footsteps to righteousness.

-Lil' Ally-bo

From The Beat: How do you plan to follow those footsteps? It's really easy to say, and we know you believe you will, but unless you have a plan we're afraid it's going to be really easy to slip back into the old ways that got you here.

Time

What, this is Lil' Soldier writing from this unit over here in Alameda County Juvenile hall. Well today is my sixteenth day in the 150 walls. I know it's not a long time in numbers but in feels like months. I'm in here for a 2-11(Robbery) and an assault with a deadly weapon, and two warrants. I'm innocent. They got the wrong soldado on the real.

The two warrants are the only thing that I had against me. Tomorrow I go to court for my pre-trial. Hopefully everything goes well. They probably gone give me some time. But it's all good. I'm gonna just keep my head held high and post up with the vatos! It's all good. I got me a coo' public pretender, but you never know what they can do!

All I got with me in here is God. That's all I need. I don't have to prove nothing to nobody but myself, not even my homies.

Well that's all for now Beat, so I'll get back at you and all that read The Beat Within. I'm gone, 'till pen meet paper...

-Lil' Soldier

From The Beat: You're right, as long as you know yourself and what you did or didn't do, you have nothing to prove—only, for your sake we hope you do prove it to the judge. And then maybe to yourself that once you get out you can stay out. Best of luck.

I Knew

I knew you was the one
I knew you was the one for me girl baby
In my life grab my hand

We can take a flight real high
Though the sky romance is real tight
We're close friends

Now we layin in my bed
Told you girl that I can do this all damn night
You said you like me so let me put it down

I knew you was the one
I knew you was the one for me girl
Now you done let me be girl

Please come with me
Baby can't you see
You need me in yo' life

Embrace you tight and call you my wife
Me and you to be

Now I am sittin' in my bed
Reminisce what we had
Now that you are gone you playin' me

You hurt me
But I am not no fool
I'm up and goin' and you're alone

That means we're not to be
We're not to be

I knew you was the one
I knew you was the one for me girl
Baby won't you be my girl friend

In my life
Grab my hand we can take a flight
Real real high

Though the sky romance is real tight
We're close friends

Now I'm on TV.
Here you come talking 'bout you love me
And that you did not want to leave me

When it's said and it's done
That means we're not to be
We're not to be

We're not to be

-To Be Or Not To Be

From The Beat: Sometimes it's just not meant to be, no matter how bad we want it. "You can't always get what you want, but if try sometimes, you might find you get what you need." The Rolling Stones sang that. Nice piece.

Checkin' In

What it do-do Beat? It's yo' boy Lil' Gumby coming strictly outta Redwood City! Well, caught up once again doing time in the Eastbay like what it do? But gotta send much respect to them at Hillcrest. Other than that I'm waiting on court to go to a group home, again! But I got to send love to my girl, Stephanie, for keeping a ninjas head straight! My mom for sure, for being my mother, off top I love her to death and I feel bad for the stuff I've done. I hope my loved ones understand that the lifestyle I live includes stuff like death, drugs, sex, hyphyness, and all types of crazy stuff.

Well I really hope I get out soon! Rest in peace to Lil' Heat, Big Foot, Frisco, Chente, Evil Eyes, Trash, Smokey and the rest of fallen soldiers!

Much love to Redwood City, EPA, Newark, Hayward, Oakland, South City and the rest of the bay! Lil' Gumby signing out!

-Lil' Gumby

From The Beat: Why should your family understand your lifestyle? As hard as they might try to understand you, sometimes the best thing to do for someone who has chosen a destructive lifestyle is to back away from them until they decide to change. You have to make your own decisions, but your loved ones shouldn't have to suffer them.

Hyfee

It's a part of my generation movement yes it is a part of life. I've been going dumb and been hyfee for seven years since Leak made the word "hyfee" up on his 3x Crazy CD.

-Been Hyfee

From The Beat: Okay, but what does it mean to go hyfee? We want to know the significance of the word to you; what you do, why you do it and what it means in your life to go hyfee.

Checking In

I've been doing my thang I have been rolling with my crew. I love to hang around in Oakland.

Yeah I thought I was all cool until I got locked up and now it's not cool at all. When I get out I wanna change my life but I'm gonna need some help!

-Kasper

From The Beat: We're glad you recognize that you'll need help. Do you have a plan for yourself or know anyone who will be there for you? We suggest you reach out to someone and especially reach down inside of yourself—you're the biggest force in your own life and no matter who is there to help you, you have to be the first.

What's Up What Up Beat!

This Lil' Mann! I got locked up for something I did do, I ain't going to lie "I took 5.0 on one in a stolen car!" I don't regret it because I feel that God put me in here for a reason, to make me realize what the stupid stuff I been doing in life! But banging my set is one thang I can't stop doing, but going back to school and getting a job that's something I wanna do to take care of mine!

I'm supposed to be getting out tomorrow so to those still locked up: keep yo' chin up and chest out, don't trip, depend on yo' self and one other man "God" well fo' sure Beat.

-Lil' Mann

From The Beat: We're really glad you're planning to go back to school and get a job, but wonder how you'll keep a job if you can't stop "banging" your set. It'll be hard to stay in school and working if your doing things that will almost definitely get you thrown back in jail. Good luck.

My Brother

Big bro Jamal man don't you know your lil' bro miss you. You been gone since I was a young teen. Everyday our ninjas ask me when you get out. Since you gone, it seem like I don't have a big brother, me and mom been stressing about you. I pray every night that you get out and fly right.

I been doing good and shhh, trying to hurry up and get out and stay with my girl again. I am gonna let you know this I'm gonna get a job when I get out.

-Lil' Doo Wop

From The Beat: So it seems like you've got some good advice for your brother—to get out and fly right. Are you going to follow your own advice? We hope so, yet we have some real concerns about your thinking, which we didn't include in your piece.

Real And Fake

It's hard to trust people.

It's even harder to tell who's real and who's fake. Smiles can be deceiving.

That's why I don't trust nobody right away. In order for me to trust someone I gotta know them for a cool minute and I had to go through some trials and tribulations with that person and they gotta earn my trust and respect.

For example, I got a lot of friends, but I only got like three or four real ninjas that I can trust with my life, family, money and stuff like that.

Because there's too many haters in the world that don't wanna see nothing but you failin'. Plus there's too many fake ninjas that act like they down with the beef, but when the funk jump ninjas is quick to bounce out on you

leave you to face a group of yo' enemies by yourself. That's why in my hood you gotta put in work to get some respect to yo' name.

But every hood gonna have at least one ninja that act down and stuff,

but when stuff gets real the true punk gonna show. That's why you gotta watch yo' back with these fake smiles

on these pretendo ninjas and females too.

You can't judge a book by it's cover.

They could smile in your face, but stab you in yo' back. But they can also fight you but have yo' back when stuff gets real.

Keep your enemies close but your friends closer 'cause it's always your own people.

I'm back at Alameda, I just left Frisco today, hopefully I get out soon so I can take care of some unfinished business. Not everybody who shhh on you is your enemy and not everybody who cleans the stuff off you is your friends.

-Lazy

From The Beat: It sounds like you never really know when you can trust someone. If your own people are the ones to look out for, you can never be sure what's real. That's a scary place to be and we hope that one day you lead a more stable life. We hope the unfinished business you speak about will not lead you into further trouble, otherwise we suppose you'll be back!

Goin' Stupid Dumb And Hyphy

Going stupid dumb and hyphy means to me a way of life, it's for ninjas who are doing wrong and ninjas who are doing right.

When you on the outs and you pop a pill you automatically shake you dreads, go nuts and show your grill. It ain't ridiculous or nothing it's just having fun. It ain't shhh else to do in the town so you just go dumb.

Ninjas will go dumb in the rain, sun, or high snow and when we really want to go dumb we go to the spot and start a side show. We do shhh like going stupid or dumb just because we don't think about nothing else but getting on and effing with our bras, when we on the block we go stupid, dumb, and nutty, and when we go to a party we strictly eighteen dummy.

Don't play with me because your life ain't no toy, but I don't really go dumb, stupid, or hypee. I'm just an on one boy.

-Dt

From The Beat: So if you're saying folks go dumb because there's nothing else to do, tell us if you had money from the mayor to start a program for young people like yourself: what would it look like?

I Keep It Touch With My Word! To Say This

My heart crush but my health is strong
I keep it touch with my word! To say thing
That...that had been touch I had lost a mind
Of a memory to say everything with power
Inside going with a soul live forever and...

The life that goes in the life with a sight
I am a night to the light it goes
bright to a nightlight
I keep it touch to my word
To say this

-Brandon

From The Beat: To say everything with power is a feat. Nice work, thanks for contributing.

Smiling Faces

What up Beat! It's Lil' Marquitos coming at you like a left hook from this here unit. In the still of the night I'd like to extend my respect and wisdom to those in the hall and penitentiary (doing time).

Now as for your topic "How do you determine a real smile from one that is fake?" The oldie song me and my carnals slap is "Smiling Faces," sometimes pretend, to be your friend can you dig-it? I don't know who sings it but it's a "slumper!"

Well, you gotta know from your natural instincts, because there are some people that are scandalous that would pull a stunt and make it seem like they really bought, received something and come at you and tell you like it is.

Though what happened to me was more "crucial" because this was my "family" that told me and I did believe him. For the fact that he had keys and everything else (stereo system) plus, I trusted his words. Though I messed up for giving him "money", but as my "family" I support my lil' homies to get home and grub on the way there. Comes to know this youngsta robbed and lied to his own homeboy! That's an example of this topic.

Like Tupac said "I ain't mad at you, ain't got nothing but love for ya... do yo' thang boy..." No hard feelings. Just telling you like it is!

-Lil' Marquitos

From The Beat: So someone you trusted as a friend deceived you. Is it that easy for you to forgive? Will you trust that person again or is your friendship changed because of it? Does having "family" lie to you make you want a different kind of family?

Real

This yo boy Twon back in the mix. What's up to all? Shhh, just holding it down. Shhh can't wait to get out this place.

-Lil' Twon

From The Beat: Hmmm... we're not sure what it is you're trying to say here. Are you trying to tell folks you still have that hood sickness? We wish you would bring something positive back to your community, but ...

Whose Fake

Sometimes you can look at a person and be able to tell that they are fake. They want to smile in your face, but really they want to take your place. Then again some people are truly genuine though. A lot of people have intentions of going bad later on. That's why you got to watch your friends or so called patnas closer than your enemies.

-Young Weezy

From The Beat: Do you think it's sad to have to always watch your back that way? Is there anyone you don't have to feel guarded with? Do you think everyone has to watch their friends so closely or is it the "patnas" you're running with?

What's On My Mind

My mom and Steph is on my mind, but so is a blunt and a thizz so I'm in the hall tryna handle my bizz so if my eyes dilated don't ask what it is. 'Cause I'm quick to give a lil' sucka the bizz.

Evil whispers in my head telling me "don't stop 'till your dead" hold up what the hell was just said? ef it, smash in a bucket make lots of duckets, My time here all over no luck, no four leaf clover but really, picture me rolling in range rover damn I'm writing like this and I'm hella sober!

-Lil' Gumby

From The Beat: Isn't it amazing how clear your head can be when your sober? We highly recommend it. Yet as for your lifestyle, oh it's in need of a makeover before the criminal justice system truly comes crashing down on you!

I got locked up for something I did do,
I ain't going to lie

I Miss My Block

Dang, I been in a group home for seven months. I came in on the Day of the Devil, which is 6/6/06. Now I am in the halls. I thought I was going to get out and go to the block and see what's really good with the block.

And I miss my mom and sisters and brother and my man and my friends and my own house. But most of all I miss my block.

-Swiss Mama GU

From The Beat: What is it about it that makes you yearn for it so badly? Do you see any connections between what you love about the block and being locked up in juvenile hall? The Devil didn't put you here, you put yourself here by what you chose to do, and those choices were dictated by the block that you miss so much. We hope you don't get out and go right back to whatever it was that led you here, because if you do, you'll find yourself writing more sad poems about the family you love and the places you miss...

The System

Something that's bothering me is the way this system works while you're in juvenile hall. I get confused that one minute girls in here will tell you, "Don't worry, it's your first time, you'll be out soon." But I'm still in here. The probation officer and the lawyers tell me otherwise.

It's hard to believe anyone here. This is really bothering me. I wish someone will just tell me if I'ma get out Friday or I won't. I hate keeping my hopes up only for it to crashed down and end up back in this hell hole.

-Baby Cakes GU

From The Beat: That's part of the pain of being in jail - you have no control over these things, and no power to learn your fate until the system is ready to tell you. There's only one solution for what bothers you, Baby Cakes, and that is: Don't come back!

In My Blood

I got Chinese in my blood
And Vietnamese in my veins
People call me insane
'Cause the evilness
In my brain
It runs in the family
'Cause that's in our blood
'Cause I'm Chinese and Vietnamese
And I'm letting these thoughts flood
Now I'm tellin' you
It Asian Pride
'Til I die
As my people get hurt
I'm tellin' them
It's not time to cry
It's time to get on our feet
And fight back
Fight for our race
Fight for our name
Fight for the things
That we believe in
Now that's just a fact
Yea, this Ngo
Just reppin' the Asian
You know what it do
You should take pride
In your people
You know what it is

-Ngo LCERS

From The Beat: Again you're writing about the evil in you, whether it's about how you sin and/or how your life is hell on the outs, Ngo. Today you write that someone is hurting your Chinese, Vietnamese people, but you don't explain who is wounding them and how they're doing it. Why don't you elaborate in your next piece? Write The Beat in detail who is doing what to you, your people and what you recommend can be done about it!

Looking At Four White Walls

One thing you don't want to go through is being mad 24/7 for no reason, looking at four white walls just thinking, wearing purple and khakis all day, taking five-minute showers, seeing the same girls every day, having to ask when you can go to the bathroom.

You got all these different people you have to listen to and they ain't yo' parents or nothing. This shhh is very messy. It's just stuff you don't want to deal with. So just think you don't want juvenile to be the thing to bother you.

-Queela GU

From The Beat: Jail is terrible. The question is, is it terrible enough to keep you from coming back? If you know what brought you here, then you also know what you have to sacrifice in order to stay out of here. Are you willing to make that sacrifice?

Talkin' Down To Me

What bothers me is when somebody try to down talk to me, actin' like they better than I am. But now I get over that shhh 'cause I know da business with myself. I would never try to down talk and act like I'm better than somebody. That just ain't me. Ain't no acting over here.

-Muck GU

From The Beat: When people try to act superior to others, what do you think they really feel about themselves inside? Could it be that they really feel insecure about themselves and use their attitude as a front for self-protection? We don't know, we just wonder if you've thought about that possibility.

What Bothers Me...

I miss my mommy and I love her too much to let her see me up in here. I don't like being in here because I got a life and plans for my future. I want to have a good job making good money. I want to get out of here and see my friends and family. I miss everyone and especially, I miss going outside and having FUN. I miss my computer!

-Neesh The Piece GU

From The Beat: Since you feel so passionately about this — and since you know that being here is like a bruise on your mommy's soul that you put there — what did you do to put yourself in this situation? Whatever it was, we hope that this cold bucket of ice water to the face will wake you up enough to make sure you never come back! That would be the best expression of love you could make for your mom!

You got all these different people
you have to listen to and they ain't
yo' parents or nothing.

Locked up

I came to this world as a little boy
Before, I played with my food and toys
Life used to be easy, nothing to worry 'bout
Got everything I wanted without a doubt
As time passed, it got harder and harder
I'm on my own, trying to get farther and farther
But it's hard with all the obstacles
But I still got my way around it though
Since I was 15, I started my grind
But I was to slick, too hard to find
But now I'm 17 and I'm locked up

-Danny B5

From The Beat: We know you didn't finish your poem, Danny, but we decided to leave the unfinished line in anyway because it says a lot. If we were writing the last couplet, it would be something like this: "But now I'm 17 and I'm locked up/So I'm goin' legit before I'm mopped up."

What Makes My Heart Beat Faster?

It beats faster when I find out that I'm gonna get out. My blood starts rushing around my body faster. I start feeling happiness in me. Tears of faith start flowing out of my eyes. Then... Bam! Detained!

I'm still here, but that feeling will come again once I go to court on Friday. Here I come.

-Baby Cakes GU

From The Beat: It sounds like an emotional roller coaster. What helps you cope with these ups and downs? Does this mean you've been out and come back? If so, why do you keep putting yourself on this emotional roller coaster? We're pretty sure the tears of joy at being released only come after tears of pain for finding yourself the property of the county... again! This time, when you cry those joyful tears at being released, we hope you make only those decisions whose consequences you want and are willing to accept.

What Bothers Me

What bothers me is having to be in YGC wearing other people clothes, and how females talk about one another and then want to be your friend. What also bothers me when somebody tries to tell me something about myself that ain't true.

Being away from my family really bothers me because I really miss being home with them. What also bothers me is not able to eat what I want, sleep when I want, and a lot of things I don't want to do and that really bothers me.

At least when I'm at home its my parents telling me what to do. We all have to obey somebody rules "yadadada mean?"

-Ladiamond GU

From The Beat: If you prefer your parents' rules to the rules in the hall, does that mean you follow them? Or does it mean that you've decided you're going to follow them in the future so you don't have to follow the rules in here (which, of course, are designed to make you not want to come back)? In fact, not coming back is the one sure way to avoid all the things in this list that bother you...

Rage In My Body

A time when my heart began beating really fast was this one time when I was with my patna (RIP), and five minutes after we split to go to the house, he got killed. I heard the gunshots and I ran back to where he was last. I was scared as hell.

I saw him on the ground, shaking, and I knew he was gone. My heart began racing and I just got this rage in my body, like I was about to lose it.

-G-B B1

From The Beat: How much do you think your heart was reflecting your fear that it might have been you down there, and how much was understandable adrenaline at what you were seeing? We are so sorry that you had to experience this, but we hope you take it as a sign to make some changes in your life. Is anything different about the way you look at life or about the way you live it since this happened? What?

Torcido

Now I realize I'm on my own
Locked in this cell all alone
No one cares if I cry

And no one even wonders why

But I can't let no one see when I shed a tear

'Cause when you're torcido, if you shed tears you show fear

So I keep my feelings to myself

'Cause people in here will try to use it against your health

Right now I'm feeling anger, sadness, and pain

Anger 'cause this system plays games and it's lame

Sadness 'cause my life will never be the same

And pain 'cause it comes with this life

I'm living in this game.

-Goofy B5

From The Beat: We can understand anger, sadness and pain for being in a system that only makes you feel worse than you did before. But what we can't understand is why none of those emotions are directed at yourself. Do you feel there should be any negative consequences for what you did? What?

Police Make My Heart Beat Fast

What makes your heart beat fast is that when I get around the police. That when my heart beat. And when I play football. What bothers me that people that be hating it won't be tolerated.

-Shoe B2

From The Beat: Why does your heart beat fast around the police? Is the way you're living making you nervous when cops are around you? There's a solution to that problem... don't do anything that the police can get you for, and your heart won't beat fast when they're around!

Our Generation Is About Hyphyness

Young Ant on the mic
Verbal lyrics comin' right
I'm always dressed tight
On da block day and night
Drugs and guns in my 'hood
Some people say our way of life ain't good
But we gotta make it some way, somehow
Life is crazy hard right about now
Our generation is about hyphyness
We always stealin' cars
Man, why is this?
You want to know why?
I'm gone tell you
'Cause people say we gone be a failure
If you give less, we don't give more
A lot of kids my age don't care no more
Whatever to get that money
I gone do it, homey
We out here tryin' to get that cash
When the police see us
We make a dash
I got one question
Is your life right?

-Young Ant B1

From The Beat: Knowing what you know, don't you think that it would be wise to not to give the system the raw material that lets it grow — your bodies! If "they" want to see you fail and provide jobs for the prison industry, why not outsmart them and refuse to be their raw material? The fact that you are here proves that you can't always make a successful dash from the police, so the only way to avoid this consequence is to avoid the actions that lead to it...

How I Got My Nickname

It was about two years ago in 2004 when I started kicking it with the homies. And some people from the Mission hopped out on me and two homies while we were drinking and we started going at it with them. But they were in their 20s, so one of them knocked me out. And ever since then I been putting in work. And that's why they call me Menace.

-Menace B2

From The Beat: And putting in work has brought you here! You must be proud.

What Bothers Me

The things that bother me are that I lost my big brother to this street. And even though I know what he was doing was wrong, I have to hold it down for big bra. So I bang a block just like he did.

I know he doesn't want me to be out there the way I am, but that shhh is easier said than done. Another thing that bothers me is hatin'-ass ninjas. It seems like every 'hood wanna beef with my block, but we don't trip 'cause we handle ours for real.

-Calvin B2

From The Beat: How did your mother react when your brother was lost to the streets? Is that what you want to do to her once more? Don't you think you owe her something? Are your own wants more important than hers? Are you so selfish that you'd force your mother to experience the loss of two sons? We hope you grow up a little, and understand that maturity often means sacrificing your own wishes for those you love, whether your parents or your children. Only children think of their own desires and care little about the desires of others. Are you mature enough to see this, or are you still acting like a child?

The Way I Get Off Shots

Young Zay
An' ballin' in the in the game
The way I get off shots
Is just insane
Hittin' three pointers
Jumpers an' hook shots
Call the police
Because I just stole the rock
Now pass it to me, Young Zay
Clownin' like streets
To the middle of the half court
Breakin' fools' ankles
When I slip an' slide
Behind the back
You know the pass
When I drive
Now look at my moves
It must be the shoes
The way I cross over
I'm sick of being made a fool
Between the legs
Now I goin' for the toe
My friends is behind me
It's nothing you can do

-Xavier B1

From The Beat: Seems like you got major hoop skills. We hope you're not just blowing smoke and can't even do lay ups. (Smile). For real though, put time into your skills, because it will pay off in the long run, plus keepin' you too busy for anything else — including breaking fools' ankles.

Is It In Your Blood

The mob run in my blood. All my family, well all my dudes in my family, everybody from the 'hood or associated with the 'hood. I lived up here all my life. My cousin lost his life up there. My cousins done took bullets up there. It's just the way I lived.

I done lost my ninjas up there. So hey man, I'm in this shhh. I don't give a damn! This ain't no game. I'm done playin'. I'm showing ninjas.

-Kendroe B2

From The Beat: What is it that you think you'll be "showing ninjas"? If it's the mob life that you think runs in your blood, then just expect to be spending a lot more of your days locked up. Is this the life you really want to live? Haven't you lost enough close friends to realize that this life you are living will only bring pain and no happiness? Tell us, how do you think you can manage to do the same things that brought you here without facing the same consequences?

My Last Breath

Step by step
I want a reach the top
Before my last breath
I'm a never stop
To my dream comes true
This is hard
But this is life
And there's nothing left to do
It's either right or wrong
And that's my choice
To choose
Step by step
Day by day
I'm a make it
Even if it's on
My last breath

-R LCRS

From The Beat: Nice poem, R. What for you is "the top"? What is your dream? Does being down at the Ranch set your dream back? When you're free again, can you stay doing only legal stuff, so you can get the skills, education, experience you'll need to accomplish your dream? Will you have the strength to choose right over wrong? We hope so.

When I Walk Down The Street

Ninjas want to be like me
They can't
I'm a pimp, get money
I get fierce when I jump in the sky
I Michael Jordan
SF on my mind
Every time I walk down the street
I got to shine
I eat fat
My belly show when I walk down the street
When I hear gunshots popping
I got to run and I see bodies dropping

-Andre B1

From The Beat: If you know that there's a big possibility of danger down certain streets, why do you choose to walk down those same streets like a shiny target demanding attention? If you walk down the wrong street and find yourself at the wrong place at the wrong time, you won't be coming back!

How Do I Know

When a girl writes me a letter, how do I know if she's telling a lie or not?
When the POs say you going home, how do I know if they lying or not?
When the teachers say you doing good and you not learning nothing, how do I know what to say?
When I'm on the block and my ninja says he has my back, how do I know he has my back?
When I'm in my room at night I start to get mad because of where I'm at — How do I know what to do to change my life?
When all my so-called friends are dead or in jail,
— How do I know to change my life before I end up like my so-called friends?
How do I know?
I don't know, but if you keep it real, you will feel better about yourself.
If you want to know something then you should ask God.

-Gbb B2

From The Beat: What questions do you ask God? What answers do you get? How has your conversation with God helped you move forward with your life? We don't know how to answer any of the questions you ask, except to say that you really can't know the answers without taking some chances on people. Sometimes those chances you take will be justified, other times they won't — and that's how we all learn throughout our lives. Everybody has their own beliefs about God, but one thing for sure is that you have to believe in yourself — and sometimes answer our own questions.

Not Going Back To The 'Hood

Man, every time somebody be telling me the real about what's next, I keep doing wrong. My heart be breaking 'cause what they tell me be real and the thought of being in the pen or dead or my legs don't work for the rest of my life is not right. And now that I see a little light, I made up my mind to not come back to the 'hood until I have everything out of myself.

-Carl B2

From The Beat: Where do you plan to go, Carl? We hope you know that you can always find dirt anywhere, and so you'll always have to make choices. Are you ready to say no to the temptations that will certainly be placed in your path wherever you are? We hope so because we absolutely agree with you that the potential consequences for the life you've been living are all bad (ranging from always having to keep one eye over your shoulder on the outs, to imprisonment or death), so the time to change is right now.

Living On The Streets

Living on the street I know how it feel to be on the streets because I lived on the streets for three months. Now I am here locked up thinking every day because I need to be at home...

-Connie B5

From The Beat: Even though we miss you, we're glad you're out of B5!

Risking Life Makes My Heart Beat Faster

What makes my heart beat faster? Well let me see because it's a number of things that get it racing. For example money. When I see a large amount of money, man, it gets it going. Or, when I'm taking a test it just pounds like it's ready to come flying out.

But what had my heart racing the most was when I awakened to a gun in my face, not fully awoke. I thought my life was gone, really. My life at risk make my heart beat within faster than ever, but the question is what makes your heart beat faster? If it's too much to answer keep "the beat within."

-Young Boog B5

From The Beat: So many things make our heart beat faster, too. Sometimes hearing a certain piece of music can do it. Or suddenly seeing a wild animal out in the woods. Having that special person squeeze our hand... Yes, many things.

Hustling's In My Blood

Man, hustling is in my bloodline. I be out here trying to get these challupas (money). I ain't the one to sit around broke always asking moms for money. I'm about my dough. I ain't with the hatin'. I'm trying keep my melon off display.

I'm finna jump on this freedom train. I'm finna knock out this time at Glenn Mills or the Ranch, it don't matter. If anything I learned in Juvenile was to man up to your own decision. I consider myself a beast in the streets. It's only one thing — if the system is a pimp, what that makes me is a whore. The system is full of lies, games, and not to mention they take your freedom.

-Daddy Stoffice B2

From The Beat: It seems like you realize the system is pimping you — getting rich off your hustle! And where has your hustle got you, except here in the hall showering with a bunch of boys, wearing someone else's drawers, and answering to a bunch of strangers telling you what to do every minute of the day! It's definitely time for you to jump on that "freedom train." So, what are your plans when you touch down? What's going to be different this time? As long as you act "the beast," the system will treat you like one — meaning they have cages reserved for you if you give them the chance to put you there!

Jail's In My Blood

I think jail runs through my family because everybody in my family that I know of have went to jail more than two times, especially my uncles and my dad.

My uncle have been in and out of jail since he was 16 and now he's 35 and still today he's in jail, right now as we speak. Dad, he's just a straight up jailbird, b. I hoping this will be the last time I go to juvy hopefully, 'cause this shhh ain't fun. You missing too much freedom outside of here. It's too many females, and homies on the outs, man, an' life is just too short

-Al Bundy B5

From The Beat: Things that are in your blood can never be changed, like your eye color. But you can change family patterns by changing your own patterns. Is it hard? Oh yes. Is it worth it? Very! Don't just hope to make this the last time, stop doing the things that give the system power over your life so you know it will be the last time. Yes, life is short and freedom is precious.

It's In My Bloodline

I'ma ride 'cause I got ridin'
In my bloodline
An' I'ma shine 'cause I got shinin'
In my bloodline
I get that dough 'cause I got hustle
In my bloodline. I bleed concrete. Yeah!
And other things that's in my blood line is
Soldier, stunta, playa and hustler.
'Cause you got to walk like soldier
Talk like stunta
Move like playa
And get it like hustler

-Vinny B5

From The Beat: We know this ain't somethin' you gonna feel/but we gotta do it by keepin' it real/the things that you boast of — the games that you play/ can lead you directly to Pelican Bay/ "Naw! Not me. I'll never get caught..."/ Yeah, we know, we hear that a lot.

No More Trouble

I got court next week, not sure what's gonna happen... I got trial for my old gun case, and a new case with cars...The bright side is at least I'm not getting in any more trouble.

Well there is nothing more to say... peace

-Lil' E B2

From The Beat: Well, the only other thing to say is how you are going to keep yourself away from trouble? Are you saying your are going to turn your life around and change the way you live? Or has that already happened?

What Bothers You

What bothers me the most is being in the halls for some shhh I didn't even do. I mean, she know I didn't do nothing to her, but she gon' lie to the boys and say I stole her purse.

-Curtis B2

From The Beat: We all are presumed innocent until proven guilty — which leads us to ask why she said you did it if you didn't. Maybe you should just take this little time as a vocation or a bad dream.

I Wanna Stop!

I completed 60 days. I would really like to go home. I'm so sick and tired of being in here. I want to be with my family. I really want to smoke a 'port. I really want to leave all the drugs alone. Stop kickin' it with the negative people. I also want to stop stealing cars and people, and people's houses. Etc.

-Edwin B2

From The Beat: Take this experience as a lesson learned, and remind yourself what you have gone through and what you hate about the hard times you've spent in the hall. If you want to stop, then stop!

My Pride

Some things that run in my family are pride, loyalty, hustling, and coming to jail. My mom and dad were drugs dealers and that's how I first got introduced to hustling.

No one in my family's gone to college. I'm going to break that chain. The things I'm going through now are like the exact some things my parents went through. Because of the pride I have, can't nobody tell me nothing. I'ma do what I do.

-G-B B1

From The Beat: It is so encouraging to read that you plan to break the pattern of no one going to college in your family. What do you want to study? What do you want to be? If you continue down the path of the blind leading the blind, you can best bet that you will be living close to where your family's lives are right now.

What Makes Your Heart Beat Faster?

What makes your heart beat faster? When my family is in danger my heart is going to be beatin' hard and then that's when I get mad and mess somebody up real bad.

-Joey B2

From The Beat: Well, it looks like you've messed yourself up pretty bad, since you've allowed yourself to be the system's prisoner!

I Be Nervous And Scared

What make my heart beat fast is when I'm in the holding cell for court and I just be thinkin' about what the judge is going to do to me. When I be in court, it's even worse.

My heart going boom boom boom. I be nervous and scared — and when I'm running from the police and when I'm getting shot at, and when I go see my PO.

-Ray Money B1

From The Beat: If the lifestyle that you live is making your heart beat fast, it must be telling you that it is not the life for you. If you're nervous and scared when you run from the police, then why not stop doing the things that force you to run from the police?

In God I Trust

All I got to say is for y'all to just keep prayer and stay close to God 'cause that's the only thing that can help you right now. He been trying to help you when you was out there trying to sell dope and steal cars, cheatin' on ya girl and not going to school. I need God and I've accepted Him and you should too.

Here's a scripture from the Bible you should remember: John 3:16, "For God so loved the world He gave his only begotten Son that whosoever shall believe in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

Amen.

-The Wizard B2

From The Beat: Have you always put your trust in God? If so, what brought you to the hall? Or is your faith something new in your life? How will your trust and belief in God help you when you are free?

A Friend's Death Makes My Heart Beat Faster

What makes my heart beat faster is when I see one of my friend's get shot or something happen to them. And when I would have to run from 5-0.

Not just run from them make my heart beat more, but if I get caught I'm going to the hall and that is the last place I would want to be. I run from them so I would not go back down. My heart beat when I hear gun shots and I think they would be shooting at me.

-DSha B5

From The Beat: It makes our heart beat faster just to read about running from the police and hearing gunshots around us! For us, seeing friends get shot was the final proof we needed to change the way we were living. Is it for you?

Jail Runs In My Family

Is it in your blood? It runs in my family to be in jail — well the boys or the men in my mom and my dad's family. My mom's brother and cousins all have been locked up before, and my mom's older brother just got out of San Quentin. My mom's little brother got caught by the FBI and they gave him more than 25-life.

I still remember when my mom found out and she was crying the whole night. My dad's been to jail... I don't know how long he did but I still love Dog. My dad's little brother used to do drugs.

-Joey B2

From The Beat: We don't believe there's such a thing as "it's in your blood" to be in jail. The most important line in this piece is the image of your mother crying when she found out her little brother was going to spend the rest of his life in prison! Do you want to be the cause of more of your mother's tears? Do you want this woman who's given up so much for you to have a brother and a son taken from her? Or do you want to break this terrible cycle of men going to prison and leaving their women behind, sad and broken? We don't know if you have the strength and courage to break this pattern, but if you do, you will be the hero your family always remembers!

The Game

I'm a thug an' I been in the game seven years, an' I know the ins and outs of the game. An' I like running with my thugs 'cause I know they go be there for me to the end 'cause they know I'm gon ride to the end with them, an' they treat me like family 'cause that's the way I treat them. I feel like I'm a father to them 'cause I took some of my ninjas in at a young age an' they treat me like I'm they father.

-Easy B5

From The Beat: You like running with your thugs, but do you also like the consequences? Do you like being here? Are you running now? Do you ever think what kinds of places they have lined up for you as you move up (or down) the levels of the criminal justice ladder?

Protecting Myself

What makes my heart beat faster is when I am going to have to protect myself when some little female comes up to me and disrespect me.

My heart beats faster when a cute boy comes up to me and starts to talk to me... my heart starts to beat faster and faster.

-Mika GU

From The Beat: What is disrespect to you? Are you talking about being disrespected in here, on the outs, or both? What do you do when your heart beats faster in this situation? Since there are no cute boys in your unit, what are you going to do when you touch down so that you can stay out of here and get some of that cute boy action?

Is it in your blood?

What runs in my family is pimps, gangsters and hustlers in every way. My family is messed up, but then on the flip side, I feel that I have the best family in the world and my grandmother holds us all together.

My mom is in jail doing a bid. My dad is an OG and he's a pimp, but he also has a job as a longshoreman. My uncles are hustlers, pimps gangsters, you name it, it's in the family. And it reflects on me, so I'm a hustler, a goon training to be a gangster, an' I even pimp females to give me what I want. You could say I'm messed up, huh! But hey, that's life.

But I also have family members that are in college an' has degrees, so that's the good part. I plan on getting a degree because I want to be a contractor. That's some of the things that run in my blood.

-Cash B B5

From The Beat: You spend a lot of time telling us about the hustlers, pimps, and gangsters, and very little time telling us about those college grads. Did the ones who got degrees also say they were goons in training to be gangsters? Did any of them pimp females to get what they want? We'd like to believe that you're going to go for that college degree, but as long as you put yourself in a position to get locked up, it's just words. You can't even achieve the basic education you need to get into college.

Beat Within Interview With Ngo

BW: Hi, Ngo, what's up today?

Ngo: Nothin'. Same ol', same ol'.

BW: One thing we at The Beat are curious about. You often write about sin, about your sinning, and about how your life is hell. But except one time, when you said a sin is anything the Bible says a sin is, the only thing you've mentioned, when you were writing about your sinning, was that sometimes you use bad words. Do you mean that because sometimes you swear, that you're sinning and that's causing your life on the outs to become like hell?

Ngo: No, not just that.

BW: What else to you is a sin?

Ngo: Somethin' you do wrong.

BW: Like what? Can you give us some examples of what you mean?

Ngo: Fighting, smoking anything, drinking, stealing. Anything the Bible says is a sin is a sin.

BW: Using bad words?

Ngo: It's a sin, but I don't consider it a sin.

BW: Before I asked you about sinning, because you write about sinning a lot, and when I asked you to give me an example, you said, "using bad words."

Ngo: That's what it say in the Bible, but I don't consider it a sin.

BW: Do you think you're sinning a lot?

Ngo: No. I just use that as a preface for my doing bad.

BW: Without implicating yourself in any mess, what do you do that's bad, that bothers you?

Ngo: Fighting, drinking, smoking.

BW: When you write that your life is hell, what do you mean by that?

Ngo: Things that I do.

BW: Like what?

Ngo: Fighting, drinking, smoking. They don't bother me, but it's the things that cause me to be incarcerated.

BW: What do you fight about?

Ngo: People disrespectin' me and my boys.

BW: What do you consider disrespectful?

Ngo: Threats. There were some people playin' basketball on the basketball court at Marina Middle School, and my boy, he walked across the court. One of the dudes say, "Get off my court," and then he mumbled something. My boys were in a group next to the court. And then I heard dude say something bad to my boy. Then I said, "What chu say?" I walked up to dude and I pushed him to the floor, and then he got up and I pushed him again. Then he got up and hit me with a left. And then I dropped him and started playing drums on his head.

BW: Did you feel bad about that?

Ngo: No.

BW: But you think fighting is a sin?

Ngo: Yes. The Bible says it is.

BW: Then why don't you stop fighting?

Ngo: I'm trying to.

BW: When you write that your life is hell on the outs, what do you mean?

Ngo: Even on the outs, you're not free. Everything costs. You gotta work for it. Everybody want to make your job harder. It's difficult to succeed.

BW: Can you give us an example of when someone made your life harder than it has to be?

Ngo: Like (a Ranch counselor.) I work in the kitchen (of

Log Cabin Ranch.) I serve food. (This counselor) dumped trash from one can into another and food fell all over the floor and he made me clean it up, and it's not even my job, it's someone else's job. That's hell right there.

BW: Okay. That probably was unnecessary. Can you give us another example?

Ngo: School.

BW: Why is school hell for you?

Ngo: Boring.

BW: All your classes are boring? Every subject?

Ngo: Yes.

BW: All your teachers?

Ngo: Boring.

BW: How many classes do you have? Throughout the day you must have a lot of teachers, right?

Ngo: Yeah. Eight.

BW: And they're all boring?

Ngo: Yes.

BW: What can you do to make school more interesting?

Ngo: I don't know.

BW: Is everything all right at home? Is living with your grandma and mother difficult?

Ngo? No. They're all good.

BW: When you were first down here at the Ranch, you were only fourteen and the only Asian here. It must have been hard for you at first.

Ngo: It was okay.

BW: But now it seems like you're learning what boys from different cultures mean by what they say—when they're kidding, teasing each other, and when they're serious and really threatening. Different cultures can use language completely differently. They can have totally different senses of humor.

Ngo: Yeah.

BW: It takes a while, doesn't it? You have to watch how they treat each other, how they play fight but mean no harm, and when it's gonna escalate. When it's on. Are you learning to tell the differences among what these guys mean by what they do?

Ngo: Yeah.

BW: Do you have any friends down here now?

Ngo. Yeah. I don't need any friends.

BW: But you have friends? Everyone seems to like you.

Ngo. Yeah, but I don't care if they do or not.

BW: Why not?

Ngo: I don't know.

BW: What can you do to make your life better? Make it fun? Make it fantastic?

Ngo: I don't know.

BW: Well, down here at the Ranch you'll have tons of time to think about what's really messing with your life and what you can do to make it happier. Let us know what we can do to help you.

Ngo: Ok, yeah. Thanks.

-Ngo LCRS

From The Beat: It's too bad you didn't have much privacy when we finished your interview, Ngo. If there's anything you'd like to discuss, anything you'd like us to interview you about, please let us know. Today you wrote another poem about your sinning, and about how your life is hell. We hope you can work through whatever is messing with your life, your head. Let us know if we can help!

When I Get Scared

When I get scared, nervous, when I know something about to happen, my heart beats extremely fast. When my heart beats fast I get quiet and I try to walk away from the situation or at least I try to.

When my heartbeat gets faster I start sweating and sometimes I have a hard time breathing. Another time when my heart beat fast is when I pop a pill and when I move around too much.

-Princess GU

From The Beat: When your heart beats so fast that you find it hard to breathe, that's called hyperventilation. When you pop pills and you also hyperventilate, it can put you in serious danger. That's what should make you scared and nervous enough to give up those pills!

Ladies

W'a 'sup with all the ladies? Y'all probably know me as EA, but I go by Easy. Y'all should just do yo' time an' get back to the outs 'cause I know y'all is missing y'all ninjas 'cause I'm missing my baby mama. So won't y'all just knock yo' time out so you can get back to yo' ninja, 'cause I'm to get back to mine on the 15th.

-Easy B5

From The Beat: Well, congratulations on getting out of there and back to your friends and family. But getting out is only valuable if you also stay out. Have you learned things that will help you do that? Like what?

When People Judge Me

What bothers me is when people judge me before they get to know me. Like they just passed judgment on me and don't even know me or my name. Another thing that bothers me is when I'm around messy females. I can't stand them. I got a lot of things that bother me. So I get annoyed quicker and bothered quick.

-Princess GU

From The Beat: What kind of judgments do you feel that people are passing on you? Do you find yourself getting annoyed quicker in the hall than on the outs?

A Part Of My Mom In Me

I think a part of my mom that I found in me is the way I gossip a lot. My mom is always causing drama with her friends and me, I'm having drama with my friends. My dad is loud, abusive, and a smoker. He's the last thing I wanna turn into. I don't have nothing of his bad habits in me.

-Baby Cakes GU

From The Beat: It's good that you don't have those negative qualities. Are you ever the subject of your mother's gossip? What do you like to gossip about? Do you ever worry that as you get older you might start acquiring some of your dad's characteristics? Naw!

They All Make My Heart Beat Faster

Knowing what's gone happen to you
Knowing what you are about to do
When you are getting sweaty
When you are breathing heavy
And when you pop them pills
And when you make a deal
When you get caught by the police
When you about to speak.
(To be continued)

-Saleemah GU

From The Beat: A lot of people have talked about their heart beating when the police come by, so we wonder if there is a certain thrill in this heightened level of fear, the way our hearts beat faster when we're on a roller coaster, and then we get in line to get on again! We look forward to reading part two of your poem to learn what makes your hear beat fast once you're in the system.

Where I'm From

Where I'm from would get you killed
So I need to stop claiming where I'm from.
Where I'm from is not safe at all, period, point blank.
Where I'm from would get you six feet under.
Where I'm from we like to go dumb.
Where I'm from people stay getting dough.
Where I'm from is all we got and we stay eating out here.
So pick up yo' 3-D glasses because I got my head to the sky, my feet on the ground, my fingers to the judge. If my money don't move and I won't budge 'cause we eating! Ya heard me.
Ain't no joy without a me. So don't claim nothing because it's dangerous. So keep yo' head up and never give up.

-B-Girl GU

From The Beat: We're not sure what message you're trying to send. You tell your readers to "claim nothing because it's dangerous," but you call yourself "Block Girl." That sounds to us like you are claiming a block... Are we wrong? How realistic are you being when you describe the block you're your relationship to it? You say that where you're from people "stay getting dough," but how much dough are you getting? Do you both love your block and hate it at the same time? If you stay there, what do you think your future holds? If you leave, where would you go and what would you do?

When The Guns Go Off

My heart beats fast when the police chase you and when the guns go off.

-Dm B1

From The Beat: Maybe your heart is telling you that your life is in great danger, and that you really need to slow your road.

666? What's To Be Afraid Of

Girls up in here to be talkin' about how it's the end of the world, the Devil's coming to get his revenge, and that the USA is going to get bombed again. I say BULLSHHH! God would not let that happen today on 6/6/06. And that's real!

-LaRonda GU

From The Beat: Things seemed to be perfectly normal on that day, so your judgment seems to be right on. Do you think there will ever come a day when any of these predictions come true?

Why Try?

I refuse to attempt to be published by the Youth Guidance Center. Why try?

-Donte B1

From The Beat: The Beat is NOT the Youth Guidance Center. YGC allows us in to conduct our workshops and publish your writing, but The Beat is completely independent of every institution we enter. So, even if you don't want to be published by YGC, that is no reason not to be published by The Beat. Are you sure this isn't just an excuse for being lazy?

My Babe Makes My Heart Beat

I love my baby. He is my every thing... well, almost everything. Every time I see him my heart beats faster. I guess I'm in love. He's tall, dark, and handsome. Well not that dark, just like I like him. He loves me more than anything else too. I want to be with him forever, so we plan to get married.

-Carmeena GU

From The Beat: It seems like you loved something more than him when you did whatever it was that let the cops take you away from him. We hope you find a way to keep your freedom when you're out, so that you aren't writing about your love but are actually with him. We also hope that you focus on what you need to do for yourself and your own future — getting your education, preparing for a career or job, getting the skills to live independently. Love is beautiful, but also very distracting, so be careful!

Hustle Is In My Blood

A hustler is in my bloodline because mostly everyone in my family is a hustler. It don't have to be the bad way of hustling. You can be on a hustle by doing good things too. But I hustle the good way and the bad way that's why I'm in jail

-Dre B5

From The Beat: You know, De'Andre, a good hustle isn't worth much when you're locked up. How many of your family members have seen the inside of a hall or a jail or a prison? Is it worth it?

Heart Beat

What yo' heart beatin' for? You scared? But you know that when I run from the police, that shhh be fun, though. But I know am go' get away just like that. It's yo' boy, Birdman. Am out.

-Birdman LCRC

From The Beat: Well, maybe you usually escape from the police, but this last time you didn't! You're about to become free again, next month, so that's all good, but from what you write, your attitude seems to be that you're ready for more "fun" running from the police in the streets again, while you're doing whatever brought you into juvy this time. Are you going straight back to the streets? We fear so, but we hope not! Can you think of anything else to do, something that is fun and that can earn you some money, that is legal and will secure your freedom? Come on, Birdman! Aren't you sick of incarceration?

In Court

What makes my heart beat faster? My heart beats fast when I'm in court. I feel hell nervous 'cause I don't know what the judge is gon' say. It feels like all eyes are on me. I feel like my parents are lookin' at me and that makes my heart beat faster. I get all calm after court though. I got (hopefully) my last hearing this Friday!

-Lil' Cheesecake GU

From The Beat: This is a good description of what it's like being in court. We'd also like to know what that feeling of relief is like once court is over. We also hope this is your last hearing — not just for the case you're in here for now, but forever and always!

Getting Out Of Here Soon

What's up Beat readers! This Princess coming out the girls' unit. I'm about to be getting out of here soon. I got court tomorrow (June 7, 2007). My PO said I might be leaving within the next 2-3 weeks, but my PO be tryna play with my emotions so I can't really listen to things she be saying. So hopefully I'll be out soon. Wish me luck.

-Princess GU

From The Beat: We wish you lots of luck Princess. Hope to NOT see you soon... (at least not behind these walls!)

What Bothers You?

What bothers me is while I'm in Juvenile Hall a whole lot of variety of females come in and out of here. Not all, but most of them are very messy. They sit down and chop it up with you, then they go behind yo' back and chop you up to other females like, "Uh, I don't like her. She ugly. She ain't cool. She was just talking about you," when all along that person wasn't even talking about nobody.

Another thing I hate in the halls is that when a female you don't get along with or that person just don't like you and be like, "I wanna beat her ass," really just all talk 'cause they really do nothing. Basically what bothers me is messy females.

-Ebony GU

From The Beat: But maybe it's the environment of jail that creates this culture both of "messy females" and of gossip. After all, the world of juvenile hall that you've allowed yourself to be put in is extremely small, so what else is there to talk about? There's a solution to what bothers you, Ebony, and that's to stay out of places like this!

Get On Your Job

What's up with The Beat? This ya boy, D-Skerts, and I just wanted to say, "What it do with all peoples in YGC? To the brothers in there, treat ya ladies right, and to the sisters in there, get on your job firme. That's all. I am out.

-D Skerts LCRC

From The Beat: What would you recommend is a good way to treat ladies? How do you treat the ladies in your life? How should ladies treat their men? Can you give some specific advice to both groups how to appreciate each other and get along better?

Is It In Your Blood?

What up, Beat Within?
Yeah, it's me, this city boy
Young T
Yadamean?
And you know
And I know

That I got pimpin' in my blood
Pimpin' in my blood
Like what does that mean?
Money in my pocket
Girls on the corner
Selling drugs and shhh
'Cause I'm a ninja
Trying to get rich
So I'm do this pimpin'
So I can get more money
More money
And I got one baby mama
And one wife
And no drama
And I still have
Pimpin' in my blood
Peace out, Beat
Holla at me

-Te Shawn LCRC

From The Beat: You sometimes write from the gentlemanly side of you; other times you write from the most disrespectful side imagineable aka the pimpin' side, Te Shawn. How do you reconcile the two? If you take your pimping seriously, how will you keep yourself out of juvy/jail so you can help your baby mama care for your baby? What else can you do, that's legal, to earn money to help raise your child? Are you tired, yet, of the street, juvy, and Ranch drama? We hope so! Don't be the fool, empower our sisters and yourself, don't be part of the problem!

I Didn't Break Any Laws

I'm frustrated of why I am in here. I thought that you come to juvenile hall for breaking the law. But this time I didn't—I didn't break any laws. It's too long of a story, but I think probation and drug court is a joke. They cheated me, and I should have known. But now I can't. Got terminated and now I have to be here 'til August 1st. But I don't care, 'cause I know I didn't do anything wrong.

-David

From The Beat: Sometimes that happens. Sometimes you can get wrongfully arrested. Everybody, including police, makes mistakes. When you go over the scenario of what went down in your mind, what could you or should you have done differently, whether or not it's a question of what's legal, to have avoided being out there, vulnerable to this mess? Are there any lessons you can learn from all this?

The Threat Of Death Thrills Me

When I get into a car crash—just the feeling of death coming close—thrills me in a way drugs can't. Oh, and I don't use drugs.

-Dice

From The Beat: How many car crashes have you been in? Enough to let you know that they provide the greatest thrills you've ever experienced? That's pretty scary, don't you think? The next time you become bored, please don't get into your car and drive anywhere. Can you just stay home and play a computer game that includes vicarious danger, instead of tempting the fates? We hope so.

I Have A Problem With Drinking

The things that run in my blood that I know about, is that my mother was a drug addict and my father was an alcoholic. I'm not sure if I'm an alcoholic, but I definitely have a problem with drinking.

-Young Drinker

From The Beat: Now that you have no access to alcohol in juvy, how are you doing without it? Can you figure out if it's fear, sadness, depression, stress, feeling overwhelmed by a world you can't control, feeling hopeless, helpless that may start you drinking for relief? What else can you do, when you're anxious, etc., to relieve that horrible acidic feeling in your stomach when life seems to be way messed up, other than drink? What better way do you have to deal with stress? Can you set yourself up for a program for alcoholics now, like AA, before you get out again? We hope so. Talk to your counselor/probation officer! Use the system to aide you!

A Whole 'Nother Level

When I'm really high or drunk, when I feel like I'm on a whole 'nother level, I feel like my heart is beating really fast or really really slow.

-Too High

From The Beat: Drugs and drinking can seriously affect your heart. Maybe your heart is really beating too quickly or too slowly when you're under the influence, it's not just a distortion of your perception caused by the intoxicant. So what do you think you should do or not do, when your heart is out of control?

Why Stand On The Block?

Am never going back to my block
Because there's nothing out there for me
There's cameras watching my every move

Am still gone rep it

But I don't think am gone be able

To just stand on the block

Asking to go to jail or get shot

So, instead of standing on my block

Every day, doing nothing

Am just gone get a job

And do my thang

Because I love my life

And I don't want to lose it

-Neezy and Shady

From The Beat: Both you guys have a good idea of how to morph your lives out of the game into a job that can become lucrative if you work at it, do a good job, and prove to your bosses that you're reliable. We're glad you consider your lives precious—they are. What kind of jobs/careers appeal to you? Can/will you finish high school and go to college to get all the experience, knowledge and training you'll need? We hope so.

I'm Goin' To College So I Can Get A Stable Job

I look at it like some things run through people's families and some don't, but as for me, hustling runs through my blood, because I gotta make sure I can support myself and hustlin' doesn't always mean grindin', because it's different ways to get yo' gooda (money) out in the world. I'm thinkin' about goin' into the music business, because it's dummy chips (a lotta money) out there. But I'm gon' to college, so if my music don't work out, I can still get a stable job. Well, I'm a end this now, so picture me rolling on them 28s. Boy, step ya game up.

-Virtuoso

From The Beat: You're right, all work is a kind of hustle, Virtuoso. That's part of the challenge and can be part of the fun, as well as a necessity. How do you hope to make it in the music industry? Do you write music? Lyrics? Play an instrument? Produce music? Work on the technical aspects of music production? What do you hope to study in college, to set yourself up in the music industry or any other profession? Whatever you choose, good luck in it!

True Love

I'm missing the touch of your skin
I'm missing being your lover and friend
I hate the fact we had to end

Since that day

You been on my mind

In my heart

My love for you

You could always find

I miss looking in your eyes

Seeing all truth, no lies

I'm sorry for what I put you through

But know that forever

I'll have true love for you

I love you

I miss you

I need you

-Slik

From The Beat: What a sweet, tender, sad love poem you've written for your former lady, Slik. If she could read it, it would surely touch her heart. Why don't you mail it to her? Life isn't over—maybe your relationship isn't over either, is that possible?

Back

I'm back again. June 1 is when I came back, but I'm probably going to get out the 8th or 11th, so I didn't do that many days here. It's all gravy, though. It's not that bad. I'll get over that shhh. The longest I've done here is forty plus days. It's nothin'. The end.

-Playa J

From The Beat: Maybe the longest you've been in juvy one consecutive time is 43 days, Playa J, but how many times have you been up in there? You always laugh when we see you up there, and it's great to see your face, and you have a good attitude toward being back, but, seriously, why isn't your life on the outs so happy, compelling, rich with meaning, that you'd do anything, change anything, give up anything, to stay free? You've gotta be tired of that place!

Almost

Yeah, what it do, Beat? I'm almost out. Been in here for a month and I get out on Monday. I'm so anxious, but still not trippin'. I'm a go lay my hands on some Newports or somethin' right? Then I'm a bounce to my cell. Peace.

-Elmo

From The Beat: The first thing you want to do when you get out is get some Newports, then bounce to your cell? Don't you mean your room? Have you been in juvy too long? If so, when you finally get out, never come back inside, okay?

MARICOPA/DURANGO, ARIZONA

When I First Saw Her

When I first saw her, I was afraid to met her
When I first met her, I was afraid to be with her
When I first got with her, I was afraid to love her
Now that I love her, I'm afraid to lose her

-Lil' Shorty, SEF Maricopa County

From The Beat: Love is a complicated thing. It's comprised of so many feelings, including fear at times. People come and go in our lives. It is a wonderful thing when we find that special someone, but it can also be scary to think about ever losing that person. But, if we spend all of our time wondering and being afraid, we never remember to experience the fun and joy of such a relationship.

The Worst Crime

Murder is one of the worst crimes you can do
because you are taking
somebody's life away and their family will be sad
because their children
are going to learn that their brother or sister died
because this man
took their life away because of some stupid
reason

-Daniel, SEF Maricopa County

From The Beat: It is good that you can empathize with the families. Wouldn't it be great if everyone stopped and thought about the consequences and affect it would have on families before they think of going through with a crime?

Hatred - Part 1

I hate being locked up in this place
It feels like I'm being sprayed in the face with
mace

Getting locked up behind a door every night

Trying to teach you to do right

-Lil' Tee-Tee, SEF Maricopa County

From The Beat: Hatred is a strong word. It definitely is an unpleasant, sad and hurtful situation being locked up against your will. I bet it is petty scary being stuck behind a locked door and not having that freedom to be able to open it up and walk through it whenever you want. I wonder if there are any OK things about being locked up? You mentioned that [they] are "trying to teach you to do right". Might this be something positive about being locked up?

My Heart Beats Hella Fast

W'at's up? So anyways, I'm gonna let you in on a couple of info about what and who makes my heart beat hella fast. Well, it's a person. His name Wolfy, and he is my life, my love, and my everything. He brightens my day, and every time I hear his voice, everything seems to feel so right. My heart beats hella fast (like a thousand miles) whenever I see my man.

There was this one time when he got locked up and he got out, but I didn't know he did. And that day he came to my pad, and that's when it started. My heart felt like a basketball bouncing up and down. And I didn't do nothing to stop it because I loved da feeling.

Now, my man's locked up and I hear he might get a year or two! I miss my heart beating, and I can't wait for that day to come when my heart s released and my lover.

Well, gots to go.

-Smokey

From The Beat: Well, it seems like both of you have some growing up to do before you're able to make a relationship together. He's locked up and you're here, so we sure hope you use this opportunity to work on those issues that are keeping you from moving forward with your life — including be able to enjoy a healthy relationship that doesn't require writing sad pieces about a love that you cannot be with.

Thinkin' Of You

I feel so empty an' incomplete
I need you right here kissing me
Just thinkin' of you' sweetness

An' yo' tender love

I'd die for you

Love you in every way

Even though you see me wit' these
other guys

Baby, they can never be you

Yeah, I do what I do

I've always been a play at heart

Pimp in mind

Love never knew I'd find

Will I ever b e somebody's wife?

You came in my life an' taught me right

I gave in to what you told me

You went all out when I needed you

These chains of love I'm blinded to

It's hard to say that I was wrong

It's easy to say that I miss you

But since you been gone

It's not the same, and it's hard to say

That I feel this way

With days gone by, so I cry

Pushin' my love for you aside

Wit' all the lies that I told you a

thousand times

Would you catch me if I fall?

Crashed, burned and lost it all?

Tell me what to do, 'cause I'm so in

love wt' you

I miss you night and day

Just waitin' till the day we get away

I have one more thing to say,

Biggie Littles

I will always love you!

-C-el-Smooth

From The Beat: We hope you are working seriously on the problems that have led to your being separated from the object of your love. In other words, we can understand why love is so important to you, but unless you find a way to deal with your own issues so that you won't risk your future freedom, you won't be able to develop a real relationship. First love yourself — which means at a minimum to respect your mind and body. If you do that, the rest will follow.

Thinking

I know I made mistakes

What's going on with my life that I'm living in
Knowing that I had a few lost while I was growin' up

RIP Peter, Mary, Larry

Why did you leave in this world where I don't belong?

I'll never get the answer

Getting taken away from my only mother who is also my
father

Two people in one

Making my first child on October 7, 2003

Had here for a year

Then she got taken away

All my anger and suffering that I have built up

Where I started using drugs

Not caring of what I was doing

Getting threatened because I didn't wanna give my body

To this vato who was a dope fiend

I couldn't wait for the day I wouldn't see him no more

And that day was on august 9, 2005 at 4:00 a.m.

Why must it be like this all of the time time

I feel like I'm going out of my mind-mind

Someone stop me nuh-nuh-nuh-nuh, leave me alone

Why must it be like this every day

'Cause every day it's the same old way

Hey dog, you hear the story, come with the territory

Now homey, break it down for me, here's my testimony

Little vato gets some fame, people start to know his

name

Now everybody wants to know what varrrrio does he claim

Because he's got the new shhh, the true shhh

Not the bullshhhh

Got his finger on the trigger and he's afraid to pull it

Got many flows so take your pick

Got more tricks than a magician

Quit messing with me, homey, keep on wishing

Stop, look and listen

Why must it be like this every night

The dogs bark loud but it's the quiet dog that bites

-Demon

From The Beat: There's something basic which we don't understand about what you've written. You say you had a child, and that your child was taken from you after a year — and that led you to seek relief in drugs. But if you got into drugs only after they took your child away, then what led them to take your child? You write about someone else with his finger on the trigger, but we get very little insight into who you are in this piece — where you've been, what led you here, and where you are going. Now, that would make a truly fine Beat piece!

Gun-Loving Gangster Girl

-Biggies Littles

From The Beat: We can't print your inappropriate piece in The Beat (we don't glorify gun use or "ride till I die" rhetoric). The only reason we've put this in is to respond to what we see as a child living in a fantasy. Bonnie and Clyde weren't heroes except in the movies — and they died violently and very young. We hope some of what you learn at Walden House will help you mature.

Recycle

I hate it when people don't recycle and compost.

-Slug

From The Beat: Well, Slug, we're not used to getting one-sentence pieces from you, but we agree 100% with this one sentence... If you compost, it means you have a garden. What do you grow?

I Miss You

The last day I see you was a big part of my life. Couldn't stop thinking about you. Those last words we had can't stop coming to my mind, so what I did was write it down in the lyrics, and it was about three pages long. I miss you, can't wait to see you again.

-Demon

From The Beat: This piece is like a tease. What is so special about the object of your love? Why not share that three-page poem with The Beat?

Bothered

I used to think just about everything was so, so irritating. That was when I was on dope and when I was coming off of dope. Coming off dope took me like months. So now still a lot of stuff bothers me, but not as much.

-Merrily

From The Beat: Things will always bother you, Merrily, because that's the nature of being alive! We're really happy that you have cleaned the chemicals out of your body enough to see how those drugs contributed to your being bothered!

What If

What if I wasn't in this shhhh

Some were gettin' money or gettin' rich

What if my life wasn't like shhhh

My mind changing and I'm not feeling this shhhh

Sometimes I feel like killing a chick

What if I didn't get locked up

What if I didn't get placed in a group home

Where would I be

Somewhere messed up gettin' high and sellin' dope

Just to live

My time is up but best believe I'll be back again.

-Nuke

From The Beat: What we find most interesting about your "what ifs" is that none of them questions what you did to put you in this situation that you hate so much. You wonder what if you had never gotten locked up, but not what if you had never done drugs. You wonder if you'd be somewhere selling drugs and getting high if you weren't here, but you don't wonder about doing other things — or whether you're keeping it real when you say you'd do that "just to live..." "What ifs" can be useful, but only if you look at the whole picture.

Sounds Like A Song

Sounds like a love song... I didn't want to break it down to y'all about my stupidity and contribution to the poison spreading... But I did... I'd witnessed mad, crazy shhhh... I've hurt people... done horrible things... Some I repent for... Most I don't... I did try to change... I'm trying to change... I'm sorry it had to be this way...

-M 'n M Littles

From The Beat: If this is a love song, there is too much left out for us to find the heart of it. For example, what do you repent and what do you not repent, and what leads you to one or the other path? If the "horrible things" you've done are related to drugs, then we can see you truly are doing something to change. Don't give up.

Changing

My life is changing all the time. I feel so lost a lot of the time. I'm searching for that solid ground, although I know I won't find it anytime soon, but I'm still gonna be looking. I'm not going to give up because I'm a savage and I know I can make it to that place I call ecstasy.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: A place called ecstasy? Except for the insane asylum and the grave, there is no such place! Ecstasy is achievable, but not permanently as in a "place." It is part of the human condition, just as despair and loneliness are also part of that condition. What do you consider ecstasy to be? Where are you searching for it? It appears to us that so far, the choices you've made in pursuit of this non-existent state of being have not helped you move forward in life. Have you thought about pursuing other goals, like your education, preparing for an occupation, improving your relationships with family and friends? We think if you do those things, happiness is likely to be one by-product.

Last week we announced that for the next couple of weeks or so, we'll be running the latest contest's submissions in *The Beat Without*. The following six pieces are submissions. Remember the first-place writer will receive a one-hundred dollar money order. Second place receives fifty-dollars, and third and fourth place will receive twenty-five dollars each.

And if you forget the topic, here it goes, "Turning Back the Hands Of Time." Tell us if you could turn back the hands of time would you? How far back would you go? What would you change? How would your life have turned out differently? Sure you could also tell us that you would not turn the hands back, but tell us why is that? Turning back the hands of time is a phrase we have heard time and time again, so tell us your take on it. Share your story, share your thoughts. If you had such power to rid the pains that have brought you to such a place would you turn the hands of time back?

We've got some of our more talented writers featured this week, so pay attention. There are many lessons to be taught in this issue.

15th Editorial Note Writing Contest: *Turning Back The Hands Of Time*

PAUL JAY REED

Texas State Prison.

If I Could Turn Back The Hands Of Time

"If I could start all over again,
Leaving would be the last thing on my mind,
If I could turn back the hands of time."
— Tyrone Davis

The words of that classic old ballad still rings in my mind. I guess I've thought about it a time or two myself... okay, maybe a few hundred times. But who hasn't thought about going back in time at some point, and changing something? I've done a lot of things I regret, and have had things done to me I resent. I've often fantasized about how different my life and the lives of others would be had I made different choices.

The problem with these time-travel fantasies is that after removing all my mistakes and the bad things people have done me, I wound up in a fairytale existence that doesn't resemble real life. I end up being this super-wise, famous, everything-I-can-imagine perfect person who can do no wrong. At the end of the fantasy, I often ask myself, if I hadn't experienced life as I have, where would all this fantasy wisdom come from. The fact is I could not dream of a better life had I not lived the lie I've lived. I could not fantasize of having made better choices had I not made the choices I've made, and had the Karma reflected back to me over the years.

Sure, it would be nice to be able to take all this wisdom and experience (perhaps more experience than wisdom!) I now have and go back to, let's say, the age of ten, then use that knowledge to live from then on. I would by now be a super, fantastic person — Dr. Paul Jay Reed, Ph.D, ex-MVP of five Super Bowls, Olympic gold medalist, billionaire! Yet even so, that ten-year-old boy would still be the sum total of the man I am today because of the things I've already lived through. Whew! Sound confusing? Listen... going back in time and changing things wouldn't change who I am because I would be relying on the experiences of the man I am now. Get it?

I am and will always be the sum total of all my experiences, good and bad. These experiences were learned through time. If I've gained wisdom at all, it has come through conflict, agony and pain; out of my foolishness I've gained wisdom. If I've learned to be more forgiving, it is because I've had the most unforgivable things done too me. I've also been forgiven for the most atrocious things I've done to others. If I'm more disciplined today, it is because I've had to gain some sort of control over my life. I can usually spot a user because I've been used so much. If I am more honest today, it is because I've paid the price of my past dishonesty.

To remove the hardships and prices I've paid for my bad choices would be to remove all the valuable lessons I've learned from them as well. Bo Lozoff says in his book, *Deep and Simple*, that when we look back at the darkest periods in our lives when nothing seemed to go right, and compare it to the times we've grown most, we will discover they were one and the same.

So, to turn back the hands of time and do anything different is to really benefit from what I've already learned.

The trick, for me, has been learning to use these lessons to make better choices as the clock continues to tick forward.

Not only that, but turning back the hands of time and removing any of the bad, negative stuff is to commit the greatest breach of etiquette — the failure to say thank you.

I've never ad much of a problem thanking God for the things I enjoy most, but I've never thanked Him for all the things I've hated to endure. Sure, I thank Him for my health and strength, but curse my illnesses as something sent by the Devil. I've thanked Him for sunshine, while complaining about the rain. I've felt blessed during moments of love's ecstasy, and cursed during periods of loneliness. I've been grateful when things have gone right, only to gripe when everything goes wrong. Now that I think about it, this makes me one of the most ungrateful, ill-mannered, spiritually immature persons on the planet!

I once read a story about a woman from the States who took a trip to London, England. While there, she visited all of London's greatest sites, taking pictures of everything. When she got ready to leave, she decided to buy a few souvenirs, mementos of her visit. She bought friends and loved ones little what-nots. But for herself, she wanted something special, unique, one of a kind that distinctly reminded her of London.

She could find nothing that fit that description. But on her last day there, she noticed a beautifully handcrafted cup in the display window of an old antique store. Though very expensive, she rushed in and purchased it.

On her flight home, she checked all her baggage in, but kept the cup in her purse. Once the plane took off, she pulled the cup out to admire its beauty. She even began talking to it. She said:

"You are truly the most beautiful cup I've ever seen. No one in this world has one like you. I can't wait to show you off to everyone I know. I won't use you like I do other cups; you're too beautiful for that. Instead, I'm gonna put you in a special display case so everyone can see you."

As she fell asleep, the cup spoke back to her in her dream. He said: "I don't really understand why you call me beautiful. Apparently, you don't know what I used to be. I used to be clay, dirt on the ground. Men walked on me and never thought much of me. Then one day, the master craftsman came along and picked me up. I didn't understand it when he beat me and pushed and pressed against me. then he stuck me in a kiln, an oven hotter than you can imagine. Once out, he began smothering me in paint and, to make matters worse, h stuck me right back in that oven."

"Yet, I've learned to thank that master craftsman. Had he never picked me up, I'd still be the dirt men walk on. Had he not beaten me in that hot oven, the first time someone handled me, I would have fallen apart. Had he not painted me, I'd have no color of my own. And had he not put me back into that oven, my color would have long-since faded."

As I look over my life, I can see I have a lot to be thankful for. Every time I've been beaten, misused and pressured — thank you. When I've been placed in the oven of oppression and despair — thank you. When I've been smothered in pain, suffocating from anxiety, worry and depression — thank you. For every price I've paid for all my bad decisions, thank you.

Rather than turning back the hands of time, I'll just be thankful for the lessons I've learned in time, and try to apply them as I watch the hands move forward.

WILLIAM GRAJEDA

Alameda County Jail (Santa Rita)

If I Could Turn Back the Hands of Time
If I could turn back the hands of time,
There would be no tears for my my momma to cry,
No pain to feel, no anger to subside,
No need to try,
Broken hearts to mend,
Shattered bonds left to loose ends,
Unspoken love lost on silent winds;
Apologies, endearments, hopes too late to give
Because time, fate, distance have become forfeit by
separations hand...

If I cold turn back the hands of time,
Bouquets of flowers, over cooked steaks, a fresh Cadillac
gifts of "Cool Waters" long walks everywhere;
"momma I love you always," no worries of despair,
Queen of my heart,
All of your sons adore you with an unconditional love,
Your beauty will infinitely be our guide through the dark,
You're the best momma, I'll always love you with all my
heart.
If I could turn back the hands of time...

If I could turn back the hands of time,
Ashes over the Bay Bridge,
There would be a gravestone to share a drink with,
No feria (money), cuetes (guns), y balas (and bullets) to
pass;
Puro bisio (bad habits), llerva (Marijuana), y rolas (songs) to
blast... Oldies but goodies in our ranfla (car),
The escorts, dramatics in the back:
"give a saldo," life is firme when our shades lean back low
to the side...
If I could turn back the hands of time...

If I could turn back the hands of time,
Stop the clock, hold the glock, no raided spots, worryin' on
the drop,
No points on the block, no bird chirpin' up top, him, her,
moms, pops, homies, who...can you hear pop, pop, pop,
The sound of the one time outside creepin' to a halt!
No more juvenile hall pit stops,
Camp dorm visits, half way house, group home temp spots,
CYA stints, futures planned for long prison trips
Or another body bag with our street nametag already waitin'
for you in it...

No more, no more, if I could turn back the hands of time,
Let me save someone that I love,
Stop death from knockin' on the door,
I'd stand guard in front,
Make sure that dark shadow passed us by.
No more tears left on an empty plot,
No eternal pain in my heart beats clock
Time wouldn't stop, I wouldn't be half dead
We would still be livin- it up with many more cinnamon
rolls,
Bar-B-Q's; Coronas and taco truck visits up ahead!..

If I could turn back the hands of time,
There wouldn't be no busted caps,
No shootin' craps,
No Hidden stash, no fast need to dash, crash,
Or hit the brakes on the gas, and certainly no K-9
whiplash...

If I could turn back the hands of time,
Only peace and harmony,
a game of fun, candy for everyone, no need to fear;
Wine spills instead of bloodstains,
No emergency hospital room visits or shattered mirrors,

Only carnival rides, corn dogs, pink popcorn,
Cotton candy surprise and the sweet flavors of Cali(fornia)
Orange and purples for you and thee...
If I could turn back the hands of time..

If I could turn back the hands of time,
"I can't wait," "it's too long," "I'm sorry baby," "I still love
you,"
False time, a façade, a lie, it can't be real,
"It's only time after all...what we had was stronger than a
clock,
I thought, look down a desert highway, "how does it make
you feel?" Nothing seems certain or for real...
Mirages upon mirages, "how many rest stops will there be?
I'm sorry babygirl,
But I told you there's no smooth ride without some bumbs
in the roads...
Life doesn't cruise that way,
Time, life, love isn't measured by a thousand nights
Or "how many days"
If I could turn back the hands of time...

If I could turn back the hands of time
There wouldn't be a need to cop any bricks to flip,
Birds to fly, points to measure, or zips
To waste on those two way tips
Eyes been trippin' for a week on some blue tinted madness,
Pass the swisher for
The purp-sleep is what I need to get back to reality, no
more,
If I could turn back the hands of time..."

If I could turn back the hands of time,
no more tears lost in puddles of spilled milk,
No more broken hearts imprisoned by guilt,
No ears deaf to the untimely slain, the lost, the confused,
The abandoned, the bruised...
To all that were born on the sidewalks of ghetto streets,
Into a world of desperations and struggle
"our" realities and truths are the foundations that you see
At the dead ends of poverty's front; trust and believe

If I could turn back the hands of time,
There would only be tears of joy, bundles of love,
Cup cakes and ice cream, melodies of fun,
Songs of happiness, cheers of laughter, funs of hugs,
Kindness in tons, peace without any ends...
Chocolate bars, soda pop, doughnut shops,
Sour powers and unconditional love for everyone...
If I could turn back the hands of time..."

If I could turn back the hands of time,
"If..."
"If only if..."
"Only if I could..."
I'm reminded of "if" as that paradox of truth:
"What's too late for me now, is not too late for you!
"If it wasn't too late. I would"
But you young juveniles, you young adults still could...
You are the wishes, you are the hopes...
If the "if onlys" are to ever come true then it must start with
you!
"If only's" are too late for the ghetto street hearts like mine
and many...
Our truths and realities have become burned to deeply within
our souls, But you young juveniles and young street g's are
still our hopes to make those "if onlys" come true...
Take heed my ghetto street youth,
'Cause we are your living examples of that hard reality and
the cold prison truths
That lay in your future if you follow me...
"If only maybe too late for me, but it's never too late for
you!
If only I could go into the future of time,

FRANK RAMOS

San Diego County Jail, San Diego, CA.

The Hands Of Mine

Time — When did it begin? When will it end?
This question, tell me, who can even begin to comprehend?
Who has the power
To add or take away an hour?
A second, a week, or maybe a year?
If you had it, would you abuse it or use it to wipe away some tears?
Or would you fear possible repercussions?
Would you base your decisions on faith? If that's the case,
would you leave room for discussion?
If you asked me, I'd probably tell you, "I don't know!"
And ask you, "Who has the answers to the questions that we pose?"
And, as the grains of sands continue o flow...
I dig deep into the prison of my mind, and let some of these captive thoughts go!
One favor I ask; I beg that you listen real close...
For as this intro ends, what begins is a viewing of my soul...

Time, what is time? I guess before any one of us could even consider if we would turn back the hands of time, we would probably want a firm grasp on what it exactly is. Time, a reality wee ponder and contemplate as we drift ff to sleep, sometimes wondering if it's a reality at all. But how many of us stay really thinkin' about time? I know as for me — and I'm sure as for a good majority of us — when it comes to death and this thing we call time, as quickly as it crosses our mind is usually as quickly as it exits. Usually without having found any greater understanding or realization of either. It is just way beyond comprehension, the heights, the depths, the width, being unmeasurable, that when we start throwing it around in our limited thinking, we get dizzy, frightened and uncomfortable. And being that we are who we are, we don't like thinkin' about things that make us uncomfortable.

Who has a great grasp on death, on time? Sure, scientists have their theories. And the various religious groups have their beliefs according to their faith. But is she wrong because he's right? Who knows, I mean absolutely knows?

Tell me, do you really think you "want" to know? Would you want to know what becomes of us when death calls our number if it was a state of nothing? Or if we had a sense of consciousness when we passed but no place to go? Just roaming, floating through the afterlife with no rest? For an eternity, with no end? Think of that word: Eternal. We hear it a lot. Always and forever. Are you kidding me? imagine being lost forever, with no end. I'm sorry, but my puny lil' human hands are just a tad small to grasp that one.

I remember in times past when discussing "The end of the world," I used to say the world ends when you die. Sure, life goes on for those living, but your existence ceases to be. Then I would have thought that would be the end of your world. If you don't know of the world, then does it exist to you? Hmmm ...

I'm reminded of the anthropomorphic principle which can be paraphrased as: We see the universe the way it is because we exist." If we knew the answers to these deep questions do you think we would live our lives differently? If we knew for a fact, not just believed or hoped because of our faith, but knew, would that change our way of living?

Let's take Christianity for an example if it was fact that if we didn't believe and repent we would spend an eternity in a lake of fire, in pure anguish forever, wouldn't you think we would believe and repent? Or how 'bout if we knew that when our "Time" was up, it was just a state of nothing. Do you think people would live life moment-to-moment, more savage, more cut throat, with less compassion for others? Only interested in them selves?

As I pose this last question, I myself wonder if it is our belief in time, and whether it ends or not, that dictates our behavior in the here and now.

Life is good, life is bad...
Life is happy, life is sad...
Choices we make, because choices we have...
Imagine if killing was the only choice we had!
If you know the consequences, then how do you expect
To make the decision and not live with the regret?
Circumstances are sometimes out of our hands...
But we do have choices like whether to act like a kid or a man...
W3e didn't choose life, but did life choose us?
If it's chance, who has the hand with the Royal Flush?

I got to fess up, at times my life seems messed up!
Sometimes I wish the Lord would take my burdens and pour me a fresh cup!
Yeah, I talk to the Lord, but He doesn't answer back...
So ask me why I was molested and I couldn't answer that!
I ask Him why did He give me a father that didn't care...
When all I needed was love and an ass whoopin' here and there...

Mommy said they'll be days like this
But does that make it fair?
Momma was a rolling stone, standing up to pressure that was hard to bear!

Sometimes I wonder if it's all just a game
With us being used as the pawns of pain...
But it is what it is, even if it's twisted...
We were given one life to live, how are you going to life it?

I consider myself an optimist, always looking at my cup half full, always finding the positive in the negatives. Some might think that's only because good things happen to me. but anyone who knows Franky knows that's not true. I got problems, sure, albeit, I'll be the first to admit most are caused by my own hands.

Let me talk quickly about some that were not of my choosing, and some that were.

I was born in the late fall of 1977 in a small hospital in a small town of Puerto Rico to a beautiful mother with much soul who perhaps f3ell too deeply in love with the wrong man, my father. After much emotional abuse, my mom was finally able to break loose from the dirt bag. But she was young, and at times it was hard for my mom to look after two kids.. so I can't say I had a stable childhood being that I moved around a lot. It's fair to say I've lived in about 12 different cities before the age of 16, ranging from New York to Georgia, Virginia, P.R., an' back to what I call the hometown — North America's finest city!

At a young age, I was molested by a neighbor in Puerto Rico, only to grow a lil' in stature and older in age to get touched again! Only this time by a female cousin. I guess you could say she was freak! And later again by my mom's friend.

At night I can' sleep
I toss and turn...
Dreaming about finger tips
About finger tips that burn!
They don't work for AT&T
But they reached out and touched me...
Thank God there was no intercourse...
But they sure did screw me.
Get it? Got it? Good!...
At least one of us ain't misunderstood!

I believe — and this being only my opinion — that my punk-ass father ruined my mom emotionally. So when my mom took me and my sister back, she really didn't stay with one man for more than a few years. So father figures came and went in my life. My mom tried and, God bless her soul, in no way would I tell this story with intentions of speakin' ill. But my life is non-fiction, and I speak real, so I can deal. Dig it?

It was my mom, my sister who is three years older, and myself. My mom liked to party a lot when she was younger, and she used to come home an' flip out on us. I used to find things in her purse that lil' boys didn't want to find in their mommy's purse. My mom kept a roof over our heads and food on the table. And she did love us. But one thing that messed me up is that she was real tight with my sister and they would shop all the time while I hardly got a crumb thrown my way.

And then I got older. And we must all understand that I am a special person and I was a handful as a kid. I needed special care, discipline and love.

My sister, being on her own trip as well as my mom, I started hangin' with the fellows on the block. And I started getting into trouble. Sure, my mom tried, but I was just too much, and she wasn't capable on her own to rear a kid such as myself. So then began the cycle: drugs, juvie, then prison six times!

I met my father a few times, and I must say they were all negative experiences. Do I hate him? No, hate is a strong word and it's an emotion that I don't feel. But I didn't like him. And if I was a type to seek out blame, I'd put it on him. He passed away in 2002 and I didn't cry. But I was sad, sad that I couldn't introduce him to my lovely wife and show him how a woman is supposed to be happy. And I was sad that I couldn't show him how a man, a father, and a

continued on next page

husband was supposed to be. But it wasn't a loss, for you can't lose what you never had.

But I'll tell you what really makes me sad. I didn't like him for the things he didn't do, and the things he did. And I used to talk a whole lot of shhh about him. But today, some will say I am no better than him, somehow, being like him and doing the things that hurt me to other people, and that saddens me.

But that is life. And sure, I didn't choose who my father was. And sure, I can have strong addictions and strong personality traits passed down. But I am not a robot, and I have a choice of who I want to be.

And that brings us to the question that has brought us here today. A choice — would I turn back the hands of time or wouldn't I? Why? That is the question!

I look back on my life, and sure, there's been pain, hurt, and regrets. Oh yeah, a whole lot of regrets. But I realize, it's the worst hurt, pain, etc. because it's my own. But like I said before, I look on the bright side of things and it's really not all that bad. When I start to cry and complain, I think of young infants born with AIDS. I think of people born into oppression, into slavery. I think of people born into war. And I say to myself, "How dare I complain! Who in the hell do I think I am!" And I rejoice in my blessings and mourn in other people's curses.

As soon as I read the question to the topic, I immediately came up with my answer: No! I would not turn back the hands time.

People, this is life. And with life comes hurt, death, pain, joy, rain. That is just something that we must deal with as long as we know our time on Earth.

I write this from prison. I mentioned early my lovely wife. Well, with that beautiful person I had a gorgeous, special lil' girl. Right now, my wife is talking to a lawyer and she is filing for divorce. She pretty much hates me and wants nothing to do with me because I

haven't been a man, and because I didn't value her. I can't blame her, and God knows how I love that woman.

But it is what it is. I thought about turning back the hands from sparing her from my existence, from the hurt and pain she experienced because of me. I thought of turning back he hands from sparing my family from any and all hurt I have caused them.

But the reason the answer of "No" came so quickly is because of my lil' girl. Her angelic face manifested itself in my mind like a portrait painted by the Hand of God. She is alive and healthy. Sure, I'm not there, but thank God I get out soon and I have choices.

We have seen on TV shows and movies where they go back in time and change something, only to set off a future of events affecting a whole lot more than they wanted. I would not dare take that chance. I have met and was blessed to be with the most special woman on this Earth. And she gave me an Angel from Heaven. I am so sorry for the hurt I've caused her, but have a thing called faith. And my faith says that I might not understand, but everything has happened for a reason. My faith has me believing in fate. So it would be useless to turn back the hands, for in the end it would end the same. I didn't choose some of the things that happened, but I wouldn't change them if I could, for I believe God did choose them. And I believe everything that has happened has happened for a greater purpose than what my humble mind can comprehend.

So I'll leave the past where it's at, and thank the Lord for the present, for it is a gift. And I'll put my faith in a better way, hopin' for a better day... tomorrow.

At first I thought I was cursed
Until "My Life" showed me her worth...
"My Life" being my daughter,
Mireya Vida Ramos
This is dedicated to you

RAY SANCHEZ JR.

Pleasant Valley State Prison

Changing My Past

What would I do if I could turn the clock back? Would I go back to improve my current conditions, or would I go back to plot my schemes more efficiently? Would I hide my dope better? Not trust this person or take a pistol to that person? How would I change my past? How would I change my past? How would I affect my future? Before, I could see how I would leap at the opportunity to abuse this ability, manipulating time for my own self fish reasons. Now? I don't know. What would I change for the better.

Since my prison sentence I've constantly wondered what would I change. I often thought about my older brother, Angelo. How I would save him, beg him to go home, leave the park with me instead of hang with the homies while I play in the jungle gyms and slides? He never would have been shot if I did. I would have someone to look up to. I would have a trailblazer to show me what works and what doesn't. I wouldn't be bumping along blindly as I felt my way through life. I would have a brother to share my joys and pains with.

But I wouldn't stop there. I'd stop myself from stealing that first roach from my dad's ashtray. Stop from drinking that first beer. Do what ever it took to prevent myself from picking up that first gun. I would do so much to end my future suffering and causing pain in others. I don't even know how many people I've hurt over the years. I've lost track somewhere along the way. I've lost so much due to gangs, drugs, and envy. Like the awestruck wonder I'd feel when pops would take me and my brothers to the aquarium, or the Lawrence Hall of Sciences in Frisco. I lost the belief that my father was indestructible. That he'd always be there for us. I lost my innocence and imagination to reality's brutal attacks. I no longer believe in Santa Clause, or believe only bad people get punished. I don't believe we are as equal as the constitution says we are. I don't believe peace exists anywhere on earth. I've lost these beliefs. I've lost them and I want them back. I would make the changes necessary to reinstall these beliefs just to prove myself that it can be done. So I know my own child won't become as disillusioned as I have.

I would sit down with my father, show him the man I've become, and beg him to take better care of his health. I would tell him how much his family needs him, the foundation on which our house is built. I would go back to wipe away my mothers tears s my father was hauled off to prison. I would talk to myself. I would tell myself that it's okay to be scared. That I don't have to fight. That the other kids aren't better just because they have new clothes and toys. I would remove the seeds of frustration I got when I was made fun of

for wearing hand me downs. I would ease out the hate I developed after I was jumped just for living on my side of Daly City. I would wipe out the smug satisfaction I got when I first sold drugs and came to school with new gear. I would eradicate the pride I had in my gang, my colors, every time I flamed up and put it down. I would go back to every key point in my life to bring these feelings to light, to show myself how they are wrong. To guide myself back on the right path.

And with all these changes, my life would be easier, better. I wouldn't be an addict. I wouldn't need alcohol to survive the hard times. My brother would still be here tot be my best friend. My father wouldn't be dying now. My education would have been second to no other aspect of my life and I would be a man to make my family proud, instead of being the son in prison who is remembered at the family gatherings he can never attend. I would be there to kiss my daughters boo-boos better and hold my wife in my arms. I would be proud, not because I rode like a sav for my side, but because I endured hardships and still prospered. Because I would be able to give back to the family who has given me so much.

I would never see a jail cell. I would never know the horrors of the thug life I've lived for so long. I would be a different man than I am now. But is that what I truly want?

Some people think you are just a collection of your live's experiences. I believe you are what you choose to do with those experiences. Would I be a empathetic, to others' pain as I am no if I changed my past? I somehow doubt it. My political views would be different. I may be a right winged republican instead of a right wing democrat. I may be a three strike proponent seeing as how I would never of seen the first hand effects that law has had on our society. I may have no pity for gang-bangers or criminals who receive ridiculous life sentences. My morals would be different because my experiences would have been different.

In order to serve the world, Jesus became a servant to all. In order to understand the pains of society's unwanted, I too, had to suffer and become unwanted. I am trying to bring about a program that will allow inmates to donate blood and have marrow to children's hospitals that specialize in fighting cancer. Would I do this if my father didn't have cancer himself? Not likely. I advocate rehabilitation over punishment for those who suffer drug addictions. Would I do so if I myself didn't experience my own addictions? I don't think so. I write to the Beat Within with the hope that I can help change the lives of those who deal with dope, guns, greed, sex, and hate every day they're on the streets. Would this be so if I did not deal with the same shhh myself? Never.

Yes, I've been through a lot, and could make many changes to avoid the pains I've survived, but I wouldn't be me anymore. I wouldn't care for you as I do now. And it's because of that and that alone that I would gladly suffer the traumas of my life. For the very hope that I could change your life for the better, I would change nothing about mine.

ISRAEL PEREZ

Salinas Valley State Prison

Reborn, So To Speak... Not!

Marcus Aurelius once wrote that, "In the life of a man, his time is but a moment, his being an incessant flux, his sense a dim rushlight, his body a prey of worms, his soul an unquiet eddy, his fortune dark, his fame doubtful. In short, all that is body is as coursing waters, all that is of the soul as dreams and vapors."

I would like to think that Marcus Aurelius' dreary observation of a man's life somehow stemmed from his own dark experiences on this strange thing called life. That hopefully he was suffering from some rare form of tortured depression, or maybe even a bout of fitful paranoia when he penned it. I would like to imagine that there is more to man than such a bleak existence. That through all flesh is "prey of worms," the soul, if properly gardened, will one day be unleashed to travel all the universe — both known and unknown.

Maybe it's just the eternal child in me, but I wish to believe in that pot of gold at the end of each rainbow. I want to think my fortune — whether good or bad — is due to that omnipotent God watching over me from the Heavens. Yet, in the deepest depths of my vaporous soul, I fear Aurelius' description of man's life is all too true.

After all, all one need do is make an amateurish study of man's history, to realize that the world of man is quite dark indeed. Take a brief, yet penetrating look around oneself, and the muddled mess that mankind is mired in becomes all too apparent. Only then does the offal stench of man's state hit one squarely in the face, making one unable to imagine anything positive for the soul.

I guess if I were to truly allow my deepest fears to ebb toward the surface, I would have to admit I no longer believe that good somehow always overcomes evil. That those who willingly choose to take up swords for the army of evil, also choose the losing side of a war. I guess one can say, I no longer believe in fairytales. And while my deepest fears are so near the surface, I might as well admit, I suspect my fellow man believes as I do as well... I pray not.

Almost with a desperate need to find a extra bit of alertness, I brought the brown plastic prison cup to my lips, and finished off what remained of my morning coffee. And though the black liquid had grown cold since I first poured it from my hot pot, it still felt invigorating as it entered my system. Turning to rinse my mouth in the sink, I touched my lips to the nearly ice-cold stream of water that flowed readily from every Mule Creek State Prison faucet. Mentally reminding myself to drink more fluids throughout the day, I almost choked on something humorous Kelly Rippa said to Regis. Feeling that that was enough TV for the morning, I pushed play on the CD player after locating 50 Cents' "Many Men."

After listening to that particular track several times, I began to wonder what was holding up the daily program. And just as I checked my watch to confirm my suspicions, the CO in the control tower announced the morning yard release. Thinking it was about that time, I took my gray baseball cap from its hook (a paperclip I had glued to the wall), and set it just barely on the top of my bald head, in the drill sergeant fashion. Pulling the cap's crisp brim down low over my eyes, I stood at my cell door ready to go outside for yard.

Looking out at the building's "dayroom," the early morning sun spilled warmly in through the six windows high up along the wall. I could tell the weather was going to produce one of those days I lived for, so my anxiousness caused me to grow a tad impatient. And it was this anxiousness that caused me to track the "floor cop" as he made his rounds along the horseshoe-shaped second tier. Watching him give the okay signal to the CO in the control tower to "pop" certain cell doors, it felt like he would never reach my own. And it was at that moment when my ex-cellmate's warning to be extra cautious in the coming weeks flashed across my mind. But feeling it was going to be too nice a day, I forced all negative thoughts to the side. And when at last the CO

stood outside my cell, his arm raised giving the okay signal, I hit the tier like a racehorse out of his stall.

Moving down the tier at a brisk pace, I deftly maneuvered around other prisoners who were also exiting their cells. I didn't bother stopping to speak with anybody the way others often do, but instead left behind me a trail of courteous "excuse me"s or "all right now"s to those I was familiar with. And it was those I'd become familiar with that I found contentment with most recently. For they had come to view me as honest, straightforward, understanding, intelligent, and all in the short period of the two and a half months I had been in Mule Creek.

But out of all the qualities my fellow inmates came to see in me, the non-violent one was the one I took the most pride in. I guess you could say this is due to my strong desire to shed an old skin. To be reborn, so to speak. For if it's one thing I wish to obtain before I either parole or expel my last breath, it's the mentality and behavior of an average citizen who has never known an hour of incarceration. Yes, I would one day like to speak like a normal person once more, walk like a normal person, think like a normal person — man, I so desperately need to feel like a normal person again.

It was in this frame of mind I reached the metal staircase which would have carried me down and out to the prison yard. Yet, it wasn't so much the outside yard that I sought, but rather the quarter mile track which encircled it. Because it was on that track where I either walked the morning away in deep thought, or held decent conversations with whatever company I picked up along the way.

So, when I felt the first violent hit to my face, before I could even take a single step, it found me a little unprepared. And it wasn't 'til my cap fell off and the second hit caught me on the forehead, that my mind fully registered I was being attacked. Without really needing to tell my body what action to take, I instinctively took my assailant down to the unforgiving concrete. And with the panic that overcomes someone who finds themselves on their back with their opponent on top of them, my attacker pulled my gray thermal shirt over my head. Then it was my turn to experience a tinge of panic as my world was cast into darkness. However, with lightning reflexes that surprised even me, I came out of the thermal shirt completely. Once free of the cumbersome garment, I felt my fists curl into tight rock-like masses. Unable to stop myself, I felt my shoulder spring forward with the white-knuckled fist it had cocked back. The blow that followed was a devastating one. Immediately, I felt the solid contact travel up my arm. Instantly, I knew my attacker's nose had been left crushed in the aftermath. And the sound of solid flesh violently impacting solid flesh echoed in my ears.

But these horrible things did not give me pause as it would a normal citizen of the world. I did not halt in worry that I had wounded severely another human being. No, instead, this horrible sound and feeling produced the opposite reaction in me. They were like a prey's sudden movement at escape, catching the eye of a predator. Automatically, they triggered something deeply imbedded with me — attack, pounce, give chase!

The violent monster CDC (California Department of Corrections) had created in me, then teased, tortured, and tormented for the last sixteen years, once again reared its grotesque head. With a savagery that is not initially present at the birth of a boy child, I began to pummel my attacker-turned-victim. And with each blow that was delivered with devastating impact, the monster within grew more excited. It did not matter that my inner voice was screaming for me to stop. It mattered little that some of my new non-violent friends were seeing me in a light I hoped they never to see me in, full of vicious violence. Even worse, I shuddered at the sight I knew I made before them, covered in another man's blood, and getting bloodier by the second...

"Get down! Get the fuck down!" was the shouted command that finally broke through my combat-focused concentration. And like every time I've heard these words yelled, the bellow's voice was heavy with fear, nervousness, shock and excitement. But surprisingly, unlike previous incidents, this barked command was not followed by the painful bite of a metal baton, the suffocating burn of O.C. Pepper Spray, nor the frightful impact of a 40 mm rubber

continued on next page

bullet that always made me think I'd been shot by the guard's mini 14 rifle for a split second.

With a long-practiced calm, which visibly unnerved the yelling C.O., I slowly walked away from the bloody scene my attacker lay prone in. Careful not to turn my back on my former adversary, nor the approaching CO with baton at the ready. I slowly lowered myself into the prone position. Allowing the cold handcuffs to be placed on my wrists, the feeling of defeat quickly engulfed me. the sickly scent of blood was all about me, and I became conscious of its stickiness between my fingers. It was then I understood a major battle was lost in my heart. It was then I felt disgusted at my inability to deny the prison monster within. I knew I had failed. And failed miserably at that.

I guess if I had the power to turn back the hands of

time, would choose to go back to that particular morning. I wouldn't dare think of going any farther than that, for it would only be upsetting other's lives for my own selfishness, and I'm pretty tired of being selfish.

So, no, I'd just go back to that morning. But instead of stepping out my cell, I would kick off my shoes and climb into bed. Of course, I fully comprehend my attacker would just be waiting there for me the following day. And, of course, I'd still end up with a couple puncture scars to add to the collection. But at least... well, at least I'd have another twenty-four hours of imagining I was once again a normal human being.

(Dedicated to D.J. Though your "Heads up" proved useless, it still means a lot. Good lookin' cookin'.)

I'm not in love with pain, but God delivers blessings in the form of trials and tribulations.

MARQUIS DAVIS

California Correctional Institution

Turning Back The Hands Of Time

Turning back the hands of time, I would not
Why interrupt God's perfect Plan
To perfect one's evil plot;

What's done was meant to be
One might say "had I not picked up that gun, I'd be free,"

Although a form of freedom is physical
There is also peace, love, and joy hide deep
Within the depths of our mental

Keep it simple
Situations get complicated when pride handcuffs
The spirits that are gentle.
The End.

The topic is one that requires thought. It is too easy for us to agree that we would turn the hands of time back to specific times or dates: (if I would have done this then, if I was there instead of over here etc...) we can all think of times in our lives that we would like to press the reset button to try that stage of the game again. Some of us have experienced so much pain in our lives, from parents and loved one's passions to the various degrees of hurt that brings about stress, tears, grief, or all. Nobody is exempt from those elements of life. Gangstas cry too, for those who thought otherwise keeping it all the way real and uncut, and being most objective, I would not turn the hands of time back.

I've been locked up for ten years on a life sentence, my father died when I was sixteen, my oldest brother died when I was seventeen, my mother died when I was twenty-three, and in between, family and friends have traveled the same rout. Anybody who knows about doing time knows that the longer we are away and trapped behind these walls, the more we become just a memory to those we left behind. No I'm not in love with pain, but God delivers blessings in the form of trials and tribulations. Example: had I not caught this life sentence I wouldn't have known that the men and women that I referred to as homies and home girls were really just other men and women in the environment. I wouldn't have known that all of the work I've put in for the set didn't mean anything to anybody, but me.

I am from South East San Diego, while most of you are from the bay, but the city or state doesn't matter because we all experience the same struggles, feelings and emotions. I've learned that the things that happen in life were meant to be, and if we could see our life and it's plan the way our

creator does, we would understand. We as people need to know that. God's Will, will be done. Who could stop what was meant to be? To do so would make one more powerful than God. What we do is apply common sense, knowledge and wisdom to our lives and refuse to deviate from what we fight, because if we continue to do what we know is wrong then it wouldn't matter how many times we turn the hands of time back, history will reflect itself. What is meant to be, is meant to be. No matter how we choose to do it, we will do what we were put on this earth to do, and like anyone who completes their workday, we will go home when our job here is done.

So don't be discouraged when a loved one passes, they done what they were put here to do. And don't desire to turn back the hands of times because unless we defeat God and take his throne the exact same thing will happen, and that means re-living the pain. I would not turn the hands of time back, because it is a fact that no one truly knows what is going to happen from one minute to the next We could plan to be somewhere in five minutes, but we don't know what's going to happen before then. For instance: take the person who's friends came over to pick them up, then you get into a car accident. You might conclude that had you stayed home you wouldn't have been in the accident. Say you defy the laws of time and wind the hands back to that day and you stay home, what happens next?

Time has been defied. It was meant for you to be in that car, but since you're not, something else will be meant to be, and that may be worse than the accident like someone hurting mom's or your sister. How would that, or something worse would have changed our lives? The question is would we turn back the hands of time? Not controlling the time when we get there. I would not turn back the hands of time, because to do so would erase the living we've done to gain the knowledge that we have. It is because of this life that we lived that allowed us to see what we see, which enables us to know what we know.

How many people do we know that was murdered, jumped, and beat — that contracted the AIDS virus? It's because we've lived the life that we have, and seen what we've seen that shows us the reality of this gang life. Some of you have not lived long enough to know that the game that we hear some speak so highly of is an illusion, that the game don't love anyone. It's because we have lived and learned that we must wear this condom before we push up in hat zone, because little mama might not even know that she is burning. We lived and learned that at this time of day these dudes be coming through, so don't be out naked. Had you not lived long enough to know that these little females over here be setting dudes up, you would have walked up on that van thinking you're about to win. The knowledge we've gained through living is most precious, so precious that when we enlighten someone else it may save a life of someone we care about.

Sincerely

MICHAEL This first time writer from a Boys Ranch in Gasquet, CA, courageously gives us a personal piece of himself as he comes with a letter and a short poem. However, even though it's a short poem it speaks volumes. He describes what it means to be a 'Holy Hustla' or what he deems 'Soul'ja Capone'. And as you can see in his letter to us, the rest of you writers must be doing something great if everyone is so interested in becoming a part of this. We recommend you follow G. Alvarado's and Rhonda Jones' writing if you're on a spiritual journey and in the meantime we'd love to hear more from you.

Soul'ja Capone

I thank the lord
for what came to be,
I respect life
and what came to me,
try to live by love
and reap what I sow,
If I plant positive
Then positive will be what grows,
I pray for knowledge
And blessed when I receive
Revelation's from the lord
Let my voice carry peace
Soul soul'ja for Christ, I ain't alone
But the street is where I roam
Carryin' my message from the slums to home,
My real name is Michael, who is like God
But tested by more than fire by the ghetto it's gone.
I take my seat at the foot of the the trone,
A Holy Huslah
Reborn a Soul'ja Capone.

RAY SANCHEZ JR. Ready for more Ray Sanchez Jr.! We sure as hell are! Ray has been a primetime favorite for a few years now, and we are so honored that he utilizes us as an outlet to touch the lives of you Beat readers. Ray writes us from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA, miles and miles away from his roots in Daly City, Ca. We truly hope one day soon Ray will join us in our office and in the community, until then he'll continue to kick some ass through the pages of this magnificent publication!

Adam's Scapegoat

Why did Adam consent
To plant the seeds of sin
In the hearts of men?
With a bite and a swallow
He brought forth knowledge
And in knowledge's path
Sin did follow.

Oh, poor foolish man
Who can forgive the last wall that guards
When at our greatest hour
When solidarity was most needed,
That wall chose to fall.

Offer your scapegoat, Adam
Offer her and mislead
Confuse your children as to who was just
Suppress her and her daughters
To hide your deeds.

So who's to blame for the sins that we make
She, the idiot who leads
Or he, the idiot who follows in her wake.

Beat Within

Hey y'all, what's good? Yea, I'm keeping it on my level, positive. Tryin' to maintain my program up here at Bar-O-Boys Ranch 8 hours north of the bay by Pelican Bay Prison, Yea deep away from home where my county sent me.

I'm from Contra Costa County, and I'm up here because I got convicted of some stuff I didn't do, but I know its karma of a lot of the messed up stuff I been did. But yea the reason why I'm writing this letter is because I've come across three issues of The Beat from a homie up here from Santa Cruz County who who gave 'em to me, and I been really feelin' them on a real level. Anyways I write poetry-rap & stuff and I was wonderin' if I could write & send some of my stuff & get it published in The Beat? Feel me, 'cause I got somethin' to say that I need to be heard. I can relate to what y'all is doin' with The Beat and really respect what you stand for.

I been through a lot of really negative B-S and lifestyle been gang and turf bangin' for all my life and as a result served the better of four years incarcerated since the age eleven years. But doin' so I realized what I was doin' wrong and I'm turning my life life around. I got tired of my distinctive life and tired of everyone gettin' killed so I found God & myself and I'm tryin' to make a positive change. I been thru my ranch three times and for the most part "I didn't get it" — was a hard head, but in the end of my last eleven month program "I got it" and then decided to go to college, but a week before I was supposed to leave to get picked up in my old neighborhood for a home invasion & convicted I been had a CYA suspension since '04 but I got lucky & my prayers answered and I got sent here to do the program.

Well, damn I'm runnin' out of time, mail call's comin' wish I could say more, put you up on game but I gotta go but if it's good let me get wit' The Beat and we could see what's up. I've been tryin' to subscribe me up! Well you don't know me but let me give you an intro into my life.

Superficial

Homegirl, I'm tired of seeing skinny witches
On TV tired and movies, listen
I just wanna speak wit' you, thick an' delicious
Hold you misses and kiss yo' lipses
I ain't trippin' on the superficals
You's super special, I love your mentals
Let's get together in my Hummer rental
Get presidential, get sentimental
Stop trippin' on society
It's whims, wants, and fickle decisions
Pick up the missing
Pieces and parts of your heart
Let's make a spark when we get to kissin'
I ain't trippin' on the TV screens
Magazines, and video fantasies
I want what make me happy, not my team
If they get between just call me slappy
I'll beat 'em crappy
Who care 'bout the world as long as we laughin'?
Who care what's chic as long as we smashin'?
Who care what's stylin' as long as we wil'ing?
I just want joy and a girl who's smiling
Take a trip to the islands
And come back tanned
Do it all unplanned
Fun, spontaneous actions 'cause I'm yo' man
Your biggest fan
And them styles and trends is just a scam.

Dear Beat Within

I hope when this letter reaches you all there it finds you doing well and helps you achieve directing our youth to living positive. My name is Keith Smith. I'm 47, born in East Palo Alto, CA. Growing up I made some bad choices in my life.

It all started at school because I wanted to be accepted by others in school and that meant proving that I could fight. That led to cutting classes and stealing and that led to juvenile hall. My first time I got a break because they told my mother to come get me. But I continued to hang with the same crowd, getting in trouble. I started smoking weed and drinking at the age of 12 and then I was sent to the Boy's Ranch. Then my mother moved to the Village in East Palo Alto because she thought it was a better neighborhood. But things got worse and I started doing drugs, snorting heroin. I thought it was cool because all of my friends were doing it and they seemed to be happy. I wanted to be happy and most of all, I wanted to fit in with the crowd. Sometimes it doesn't matter to you, because we think we are doing what we want, but we are really manipulating ourselves into thinking that we are in control and we really are not, because you just want to fit in with the crowd.

As I got older, I started asking myself what happened to all my dreams and goals. I really forgot what I really wanted in life. I had been so busy trying to fit in that I forgot about myself and what I wanted as a child. I knew what I wanted and what's funny about this is all the things I wanted I knew I could get them honestly. Peer pressure is the cause of a lot of bad choices that our young sisters and brothers are making today.

I am presently incarcerated in the California CDC system and I see a lot of young brothers come through these gates lost and confused because there are so many prison rules made by the prisoners here. There are prison gangs and prison politics in here. When they get here they learn that everything is racial in here. You can't talk to everybody, only your own people. And they have so many gangs in here that it's always something going on in here related to violence. Where I'm at we only get one hour a day to go to the yard. The food is really awful here and you can't just sit at any table. You have to have someone to watch out for you while you shower so you don't get stuck with a shank (knife). It is really terrible in here.

Today I spend a lot of time talking to people who want to change their life because there are a lot of forgotten people in here because of poor choices. Many of you might say that could never happen to me and really mean it, but I said that too and now I'm sitting here in this small cell trying to reach brothers who want to listen. Life is really great when you are doing right and being kind to others. Remember, your past doesn't have to be your future.

KEITH SMITH We have a new writer on the prowl this week and he introduces himself with a bang. At first he just wrote to ask for a subscription, but one of our most dedicated and beloved volunteers encouraged him to write his story when she found out he was from East Palo Alto, CA knowing we do workshops with the youngsters out there. He's currently doing his time in the CDC in San Diego, Ca, but although that's a few hundred plus miles away from where we are, he makes us feel closer as he courageously gives a piece of himself — a piece of himself that has us waiting for more. So without further ado we give to you, Keith Smith.

He tried the prettiest woman, the army,
Selling and doing all kinds of drugs
But not one of these things
Gave him the feeling of being loved

Remember Me

Do you remember the little poor boy from the projects
The one that you said wouldn't amount to anything?

You used to snicker and laugh at his hand-me-down clothes

As he passed by,
Rejected by his peers,
Never knowing why

As the little boy got older,
He tried to fit in,
Simply wanting a friend

He tried the prettiest woman, the army,
Selling and doing all kinds of drugs
But not one of these things
Gave him the feeling of being loved

The little boy grew up and left the projects
And went down by the sea
In search of a lifetime of love,
Only to be deceived

Be careful how you think
Your life is shaped by your thoughts

CI OG We love when people talk about topics that are universal whether you're locked up or not because there are people out here that allow themselves to be incarcerated. Locked up to ways of thinking that hinder our growth. Sometimes we want to change, but don't put forth the effort for fear of the consequences. Locking ourselves within our own created comfort zones. And most of the time our peers don't help us because seeing someone expand and move out of their stagnation makes other people uncomfortable. Our next writer, CIOG, tackles this idea and does so with a wisdom that permeates through the page. We can tell he's seen a lot and has analyzed his observations. He writes to us from the California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi, CA. And if misery loves company, we hope he's doing his best to remain lonely. Thank you for such a great piece.

Misery Loves Company

I feel that it's very important that we all know that the choices we make in life should be your own choices, not someone else's. Whether your choice is wrong or right; make it your own choice because you have to deal with the repercussions of your own actions, not the man or woman who made your choice for you. Misery loves company, and in prison and other penal systems as well as outside of these walls there is a lot of it.

Food for thought: I find that when we come into knowledge and accept it, that the life we were living had no purpose reasonably attained, and you're tired of living a life where you're tired of running into brick walls. Then try to choose a more

prosperous path, one filled with forgiveness and love for the next person. Whether the next person is black, brown, pink, etc. There will always be those who won't respect your change. Those are the people who will want you to think how they think, and act how they act, as if their actions are law. When in your heart, you're tired of acting like your mother raised a dummy. You have a choice.

Recently, I was told by a peer that I act like I don't want to hang out with the homies. He said this because I don't come out to the yard as often as they would like me to. I am grown, for one: I have life in prison behind the "homies" for two: I have just completed writing a novel, and am currently writing an autobiography, and doing what I do to educate and occupy myself. No, I don't want to hang out and talk about matters that don't concern bringing me home or bettering me. Like some of you young folks who write The Beat. I also have children, a little girl and a little boy and like you, I miss mines. What are you going to do about it? We have our choices.

So I caution you to make wise choices so that you won't have to travel through this perverse system and have your choices limited or suffer persecution because you chose to do what's right because you're tired of doing what's wrong. If you miss your child or freedom, stop doing the things that if you're caught you will be taken from them. No buts. We have choices, and misery loves company.

Sincerely,

G. ALVARADO The Beat Without section just gets better and better, as this next writer, full of passion and deep feeling, as always, gives us our spiritual dosage. He eloquently talks about God in a way that everyone can feel — even people who don't believe in God. He takes what's dear to him and explains it in a way that can make sense to us all. For that, we're thankful because not everyone is so thoughtful when expressing themselves. He writes us from Calipatria State Prison in Calipatria, CA. And as he questions what's to come while standing firm to his belief that there is something greater for him in this life or if not, in the one after it. We would love to be updated on what's going on with "G" because we've grown attached to his spiritual quest. Keep us posted.

An Ethereal Good Bye

I've built monuments
out of the dark clay of sorrows.
Monstrous figures
detailing
the failures of a cloudy past

I'd gladly denounce my salvation
for a single flower
of the garden
before memory.

I've lost all hope
My waiting
has been in vain.
If you are my friend –
please, utter not
a single word in my defense.

I stand alone
dancing
The lonely waltz
of solitude...

Wanting no more tomorrow
but hoping
for a second chance.

My time is coming
I can feel it
in the bitter chill
Shattering my bones...

I will not ask
for redemption

I will cast
no more "forgive me Lord" calls...

I don't know
what else to say

Mi corazon demands
This pain

I stand alone
dancing
The lonely waltz
of solitude . . .

Wanting no more tomorrow
but hoping
for a second chance.

The Heart

The heart
is a garden
With bolted gates.
Waiting
for the gardener
possessor of the one key

In this garden
There's a space
reserved for thy seed
If planted right
in time
It'll yield
a big healthy tree

But this tender combination
must be
constantly watered
and cared for...
Before
it becomes
That aromatic
billowing trance
of branches –
bearers of the
most delicious
and sweetest of fruits:
"Love"

With Open Wings

The more I seek
The more questions I find.
I want to find meaning
Where there is none.
I want to find connections
Where there is not one to be had.

Vows are mere meaningless
inconsistencies
At odds with our soul.

I want freedom, love,
Along with compassion
To rise above everything else...
To hell with all the chatter
About what's wrong with me!

Solitude is fine and well
For a day or two.
But my restless nature....
Demands more...
It begs me to stop
To take a break from
apprehension.

Maybe God Will Listen

I am afraid
Scared — to face
What'll be left behind.

How am I
Gonna be told?

Am I gonna be
The hero
Who left to conquer his destiny
To slaughter dragons
In a foreign land?

Or am I
Gonna be the villain
Like those depicted
In old western movies.

You know?
The ones with no courage
But always
At the ready
To cut your throat?

Why do I bother
I won't be here
To face them
To hear their prayers,
All for the salvation
Of my soul.

I know God will hear them
I was born
With his cross
I am his son.

Grandma is praying
My aunts are praying...

Everyone I know is praying.

Maybe –
God will listen.

Everywhere

Where our pride and order has
ruled
There has been nothing
But destruction and fatalities
Without final results...

"I am a free man!"
Born in a wild beautiful violent
land.

I am the son of palms,
And sugar cane –
I am the grandson of the Moon
And the Pacific
...I am land in my heart...!

I am people of my people!

I am a dream
Dreamed in the spirit world!

I am a man!
Ready and eager
To receive...the understanding of
Being.

Dear Beat Within

My name is Adam Crane but people call me "Crane". I'm 27 years old and sittin' in County Jail. I've been here many times throughout my life. Although up until now, I've never actually spent any time. My life has been a hard life to live. Grew up in the streets, sellin' and usin' dope, stealin' and carrying guns.

I'm here on a murder beef. It was a self-defense. I've accepted responsibility and confessed to what I did. I'm sure I'll go to prison for some time. I only pray that it's not forever. I can only hope that the jury and the D-A understand the situation.

I did a lot of bad things to a lot of people that were friends and family before I came here. Through the seventeen months I've been here, they have all been there to support me. I've grown so much in the time that I've been down. I've learned how it is to really have people love you.

I know in my heart that I've changed. I'm learning to deal with anger and frustration in better ways. I don't have a title, but I've written a poem. Might not make it to your pages but it's a huge step for me to even get it out. The Beat Within is an awesome source to learn from. I just hope that the young men and women who cross your pages and also those who don't, are seeing the mistakes in their choices and knowing that they have the power to change.

We all have the choices to make decisions, good, or bad, too often we make the bad or wrong one. If the world is to get better, it's up to them, our youth, to make it.

Thank you for all that you are about.

ADAM CRANE

Fighting a serious case in Contra Costa County Jail, 'Crane' writes us a compassionate letter followed by a brilliant poem. In his letter he humbly goes on to say, "I don't have a title, but I've written a poem. Might not make it to your pages but it's a huge step for me to even get it out." Are you kidding? That poem is off the hook and we recognize that it's a huge step for you — a step we really enjoyed witnessing you take. That glimmer of hope may become exactly what he needs to triumph, 'you'll see'.

Make Mine Beautiful

I'm a lost and condemned soul
My home, this cell, I consider a hole
With no one but strangers to talk to

Sitting here with no air flow
And only the faint light glow
I wonder does anyone feel like I do

I know that it's my fault I'm here
Why I've lost everything I held dear
Sometimes I think about why I still live

I never meant to do it
Tell me why am I going through this
When I've got so much to give

I miss my friends and many others
Even more; my parents, sisters and brothers
Will a day ever come for me to be free?

I feel as though I let everyone down
Our lives begin as big empty ground
I'll make mine beautiful if I get out.
You'll see.

In other words there is hope that as a consequence of searching within one's soul, there is a beautiful eagle waiting to free itself.

TLECOLOTL GUTIERREZ

We hate to get all sappy but the exchange between workshop participants and those we correspond with through letters is magical. Some young people don't realize the power they possess when they sit down and take what they have to say serious, but when they do, it's obvious that the possibilities are endless. People who the youngsters aren't even aware of are reading their pieces — people we hold very dear to us like this next writer from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA. He talks about what these writings mean to him in his letter to us. And then blows us away with two incredible poems he humbly titles 'Poem I' and 'Poem II'. We couldn't conclude it better than he did by saying, "Peace to all, and keep those Beat poems alive." We also hope you do the same!

Poem II

You come to me
In the quietest of times
I can hear the pounding
Of the horses hoofs
Striking the earth
With power and fury
Woe to him
Who takes no notice
For the ghost
Riding that steed
Is your own and the verse
Which follows
Indeed is your own. Come
home
To breathe
Into your pen
And into poem...

Time to close. Peace to
all and keep those Beat
poems alive!

Poem I

Without challenge
We must never know
Who and what we are
You must realize
You have the fortitude
To complete
All your heart endeavors
Even if
All you want to do
Is nothing!
What a paradox!
We face these issues
Not to give them life
But to face reality
And confront the fear
True light knows no
boundaries...
...outside the mirror
anything is possible.

Beat Within

Thank you so much for keeping me on your subscription list! The voices of all those fantastic contributors who share their grim realities of the barrio/ghetto life, with all its ups and of course, sometimes downs, continue to encourage us who already are doing long stretches.

These words of inner consciousness continue to put me on the edge of my bunk, as I read of the tremendous situations the youngsters find themselves in! Whether it's glass breaking, bullets flying, mothers screaming in court, but yet they still find the words to express their internal desire to lift themselves out of the contentions of poverty both in a spiritual sense as well as financial.

In other words there is hope that as a consequence of searching within one's soul, there is a beautiful eagle waiting to free itself.

In some societies to dress in bird feathers is an expression of freeing the spirit to commune with the higher self.

Poetry is also expression of the spiritual, or higher self, the real person who resides within all of us regardless of race or financial standing.

I can see that many people find it frustrating to be poor with seemingly no opportunity to make or have money except through the "street enterprise".

Well, it's no laughing matter that many who choose to live the street life end up in prison with no money! So "consequence" is a part of "expression". Because however you choose to express yourself you will have a consequence.

You will either fly above your current situation or you will join the prison population which is housed in 33 prisons across the state and some of these positions are permanent.

For the very hope that I could change your life for the better, I would change nothing about mine.

check out the rest of Ray Sanchez Jr.'s contest entry piece on page 49

